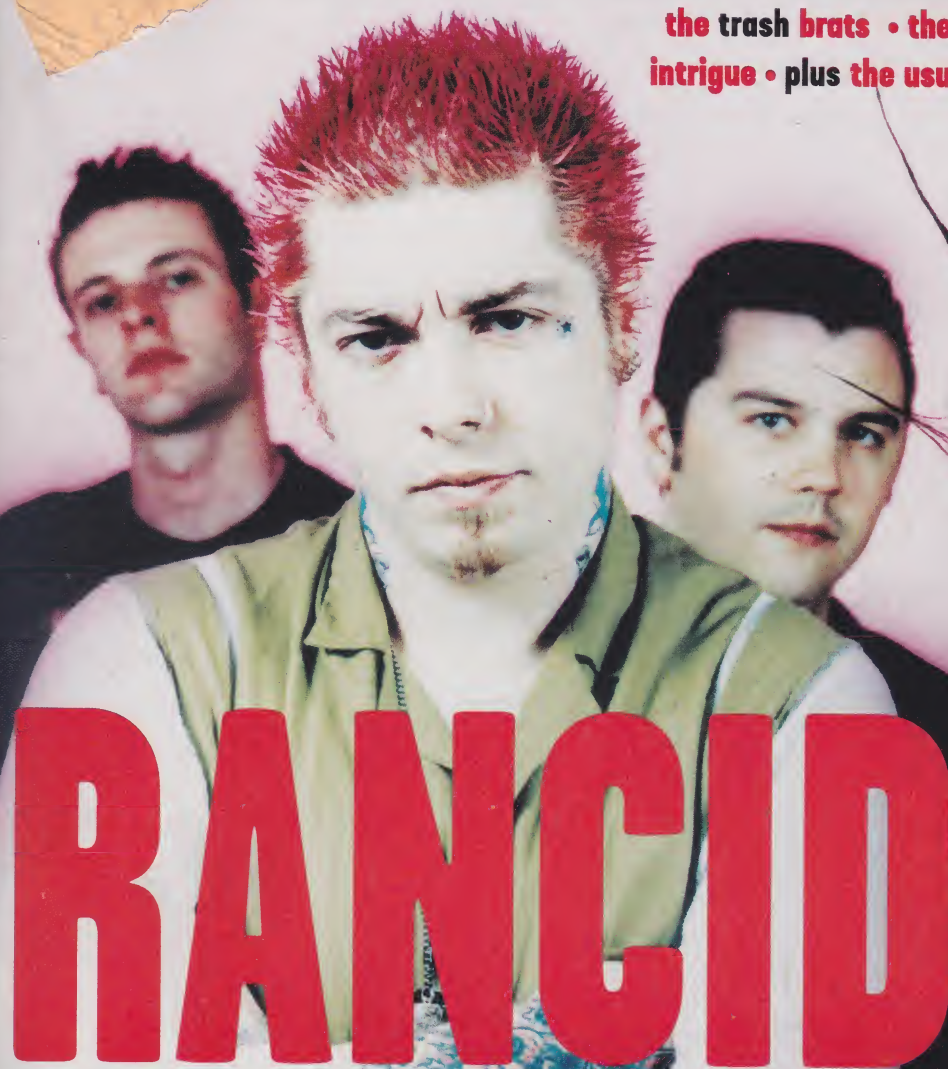




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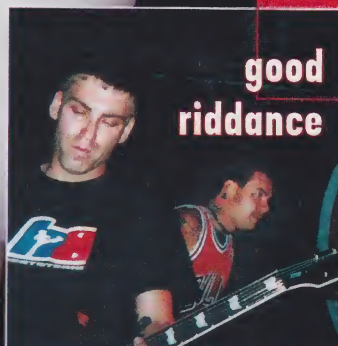


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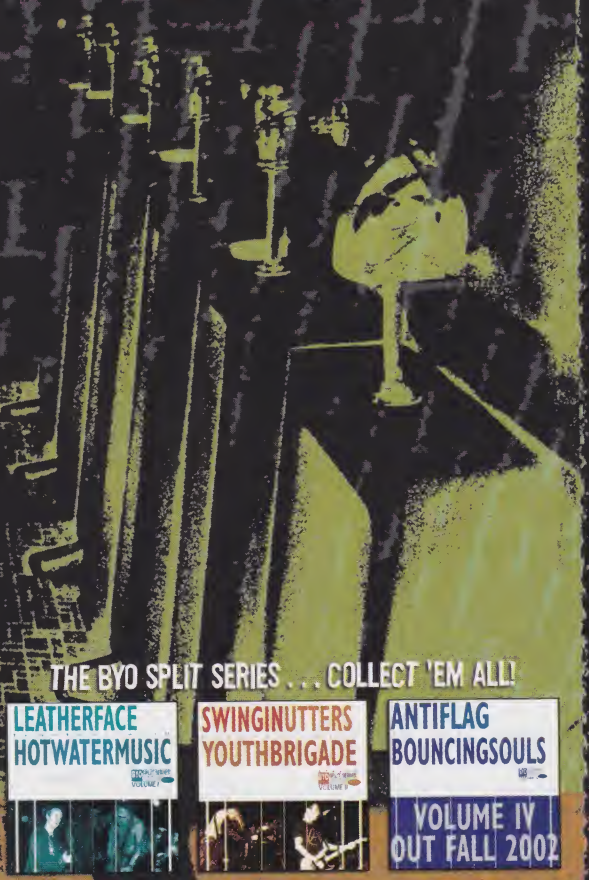


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good riddance

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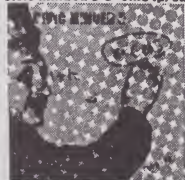
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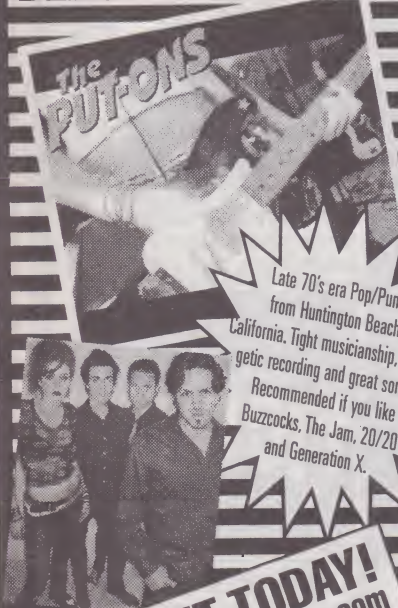
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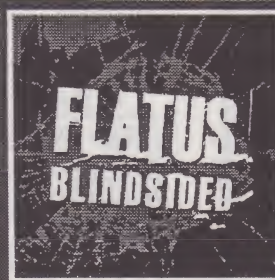
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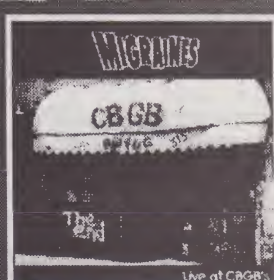


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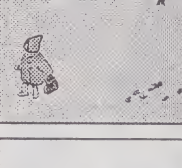
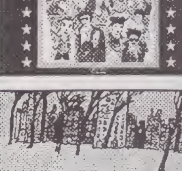
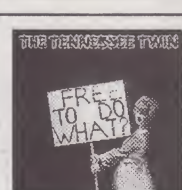
### Mark Kleiner Power Trio — Love To Night CD

• Two years after leaving  
Vancouver abruptly for the Prairies to follow his muse ("Called to God" the story went), Mark  
Kleiner, the son of a preacher man and ex-Jungle/Sister Lovers brainchild, came back to the  
West Coast, teamed up with Kurt Dahle (New Pornographers) and Pete Bastard of Flash Bastard,  
and hatched this: ten pop-rock gems of pure sunshine bliss. "God basically just wanted me to  
take a breather from the West Coast razzle dazzle and focus a little more on my songwriting,"  
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### young and sexy — stand up for your mother CD

• A lush five-piece featuring co-ed  
co-lead vocals, young and sexy might have you thinking of Guided by Voices, Fleetwood Mac,  
and the Carpenters, but maybe that's just us. The highly opinionated Robert Dayton of Canned  
Hamm says, "young and sexy are one of those musical groups on the cusp. They're ready to  
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sounds... and blushing mannerisms." Whatever! We just like the album! \$12ppd

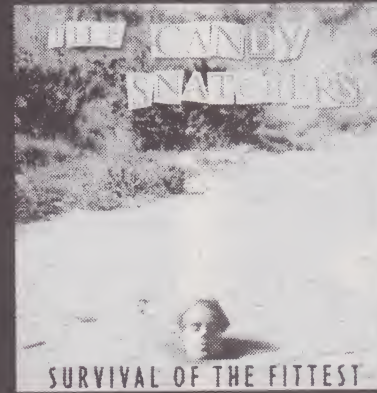
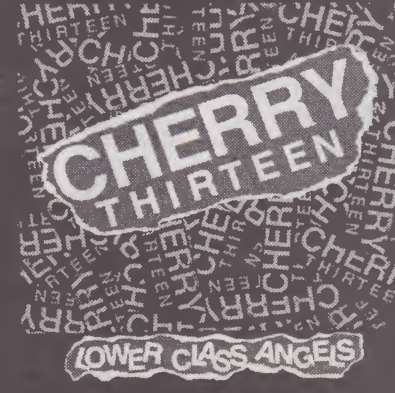
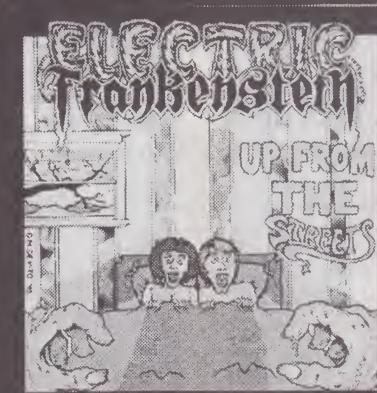
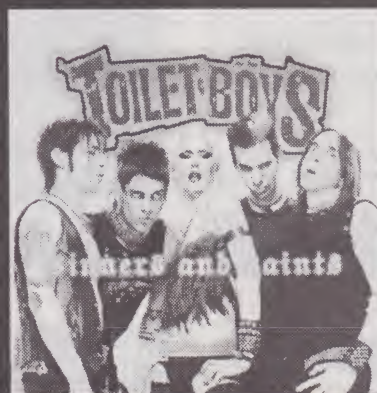
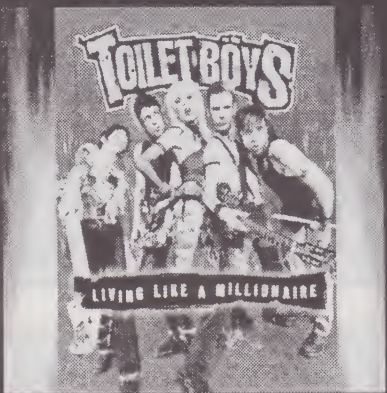
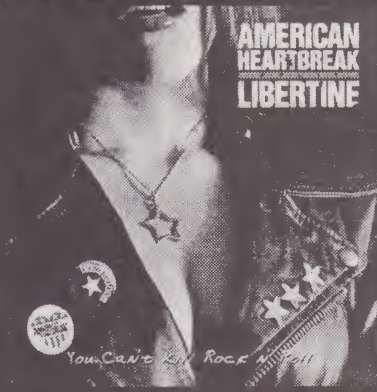
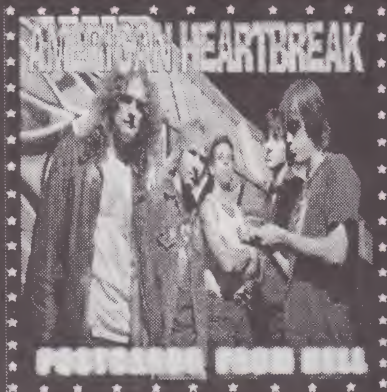
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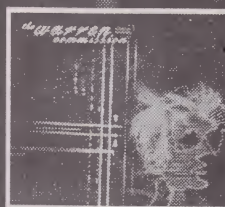
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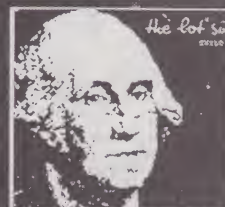
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# R E T U R N F I R E

## IT'S THE SEAT OF THE PUNK ROCK SCENE...IT'S GILMAN STREET...

Hello *Hit List*:

I wonder if this letter will even be printed, much less read by whoever checks your e-mail. After all, I'm not some "old" (I use the term loosely and with utmost sarcasm, thank you) and jaded type, spending all of my time in sleazy bars checking out the latest in "primitive and aggressive," or more recently, "trashed out" rock 'n' roll. Instead, I occasionally book shows at everyone's favorite Berkeley "punk rock" milk bar and de facto babysitting service for unruly underage drunks, known as 924 Gilman Street.

First off, I can't remember ever seeing the Briefs on our booking board, but I guess "we" did in fact bump them off of a show that they were supposed to play due to their recent signing to Interscope. Yeah, we have this pesky policy of not booking "major label" bands...mostly due to the success of Green Day back in 1994, because the theory went that they and other major label bands would draw too many people for the volunteer staff, including security, to handle with efficiency and a minimum of stress. In recent years, at least as far as I am concerned, that policy has grown to be more supportive of those punk bands and their various offshoots that continue to remain DIY and underground. Surely even Jeff Bale himself can at least appreciate that idea in theory, even though he has gone on record numerous times since *HL*'s inception that he hates the club. That's fine by me.

But the Alkaline Trio... I can safely say that if I had gotten a call from their booking agent asking if they could play, I would almost certainly have answered with an emphatic "NO!" Why? How about that wimpy commercial sound, which isn't "punk rock" to me in the slightest? That big rock star tour bus also figures in to my disgust towards that band, and others of their ilk. Personally, I'd rather have bands like the Trio, or Strung Out and the Mad Caddies, play somewhere else so that I and others that are into music of an abrasive and sometimes downright abusive nature won't have to see them. Both Strung Out and the Mad Caddies came through and managed to get shows at Gilman recently...Strung Out proved to be pretty egotistical when dealing with the Gilman staff, while the Mad Caddies

showed up in an RV, and even tried whining to Gilman's head of booking about how the damn thing cost them about four hundred dollars a day...to me, this is a blatant attempt at guilt-tripping someone into giving them more money for their troubles. It didn't exactly work out for them, in case you were wondering.

Yep, I hate these bland, commercial-sounding "punk" bands with a passion and would like nothing more than to be given their addresses and enough ammunition to wipe them off the face of the earth once and for all. I find it hard to believe that people actually LIKE that garbage, but hey, people are pretty stupid these days, and their collective intelligence isn't increasing either.

And I don't think I should even get started about my disgust for the unnamed soul that happened to show a lack of respect for Gilman's "no major label" policy by allowing Green Day to take the stage at the recent Adeline Records showcase. Of course, I wasn't there because I was hanging out at a way cooler, more DIY, more underground show at Mission Records.

Which brings us to this: I happened to be fortunate enough to attend Antiseen's show at Burnt Ramen Studios in Richmond when they came through recently. No, there weren't very many people there, and I didn't see anyone even remotely resembling one Jeff Bale there either. Not having heard very much from the COS co-founders, I wasn't sure what to expect, but after witnessing the Cosmic Commander of Wrestling ripping into a heckling "gutter punk" kid with gusto before the fine sets from both Antiseen and Limecell, I was sold and even bought the picture disc version of "The Boys from Brutalsville" a week or so later. I don't know if I'd refer to Antiseen as the "baddest and only true punk band in the world," but they're definitely one of the bands that enjoys constant rotation through the ol' CD player for certain.

My e-mail address will be included at the end of this rant and rave session, so if the booking agent for Antiseen (if they have one) should feel so inclined, he or she is more than welcome to contact me to set up a show for them at Gilman. And with how most of the current staff at Gilman is these days, I can safely say that I don't think they'd know what to make of Jeff Clayton once he starts gouging his head open. Hell, we'll throw fellow Confederacy

of Scumbags Hammerlock on the bill, and maybe even some "anarcho" punk band for the Cosmic Commander to make fun of. Since Antiseen unfortunately doesn't have a whole lot of drawing power here in the Bay Area, I'd have to put together a show that isn't a typical Confederacy of Scum type of show, but the confrontational value would be worth the price of admission alone. But let it be known that we at 924 Gilman don't "do" guarantees, but we'll do our best to make sure Antiseen and company get taken care of financially.

And I encourage them to provide one of their "exploding barbed wire" sets as well, which would be much more memorable. I'm all for seeing how "da kids" would respond to them, especially when Antiseen starts playing songs like "Animals...Eat 'Em" or "Watch the Bastard Fry." Let's do it!

On a completely different subject, I have to wonder if Brett Mathews listens to any current hardcore bands that aren't on Bridge 9 or some of the "bigger" hardcore labels out there. Oh wait, he did give it up for DS-13, but what about other bands like Life's Halt, What Happens Next, Capitalist Casualties, 9 Shocks Terror, Tragedy, Gehenna, Vae Victis, Artimus Pyle, Exclaim, Jellyroll Rockheads, Uncurbed, or Crucial Section? Or smaller and up-and-coming bands like Blown to Bits? All of these bands and more like them absolutely blow boring bands like American Nightmare out of the water with ease. Do you need a metal hardcore fix? Don't waste your time with Converge or Dillinger Escape Plan...check out the mighty Walls of Jericho instead, who take chugga-chugga 'core and mix it with awesome old Slayer-style riffage and actually play fast to boot. They were absolutely by far one of the best bands I'd seen last year.

But I guess I should expect this from someone who claims to be a longtime record collector, yet never even knew of the greatness that is Raw Power's "Screams from the Gutter" until walking into Gilman late one night after a Lifes Halt show and hearing it blasting on the CD player, courtesy of yours truly. Oh yes, I went there! I also have to wonder if Brett's constant promotion of Bridge 9 in his column has anything to do with his band having a record on said label, but it may just be an odd coincidence. Not like I have a problem with anyone having a record released on their favorite label or anything!



# R E T U R N F I R E

No, I'm not talking shit, more like offering a little bit of criticism. I actually enjoy reading every issue of *Hit List*, and have done so since the first issue, particularly the columns by people like Richard Tater and thee Whiskey Rebel. And Jeff, you won't hear anything bad from me about how you've apparently been burned out on hardcore punk for almost twenty years. At the very least you were cool enough to reissue "Not So Quiet on the Western Front" and "Welcome to 1984", although the latter is virtually nonexistent in the record stores I frequent. Can I still order a copy from Sonic Reducer, or am I just shit out of luck?

And lastly, Jeff, have you been rockin' out to those Faster Pussycat LPs recently?

Jake Kelly  
konstantflow@yahoo.com

Dear Jake:

Thanks for the many comments, most of which were on target (though some were perhaps needlessly harsh). I'm sure Brett will want to say something in response to your criticisms of him, but I don't really have any other bones to pick with you. And the answer is yes, I still do occasionally listen to the first *FASTER PUSSYCAT* LP!

-Jeff Bale

Ah, Jake. So nice to hear from you. In response to your column, er..., um, I mean, ah, letter. We have stated since issue #1 that we are not Maximum Rock and Roll. I appreciate MRR and the gap that it fills in the scene, but *Hit List*, for the most part, has completely different ideas about the ideals of punk. *Gilman St.*, in essence, is an extension of MRR in nightclub form, therefore it is not surprising that you have a difference of opinion with our takes. Difference? Briefs: MRR / *Gilman*- Let's look into their deep past history, examine their lyrics for any offensive words, and have a talk with them and see what their plans for the next fiscal year are; *Hit List*-Fucking great rock n' roll band, let em' play. Neither one is wrong, just different. MRR liked the band well enough to put them on the cover of their rag a few months prior. All the *Gilman* bookers and staff were there at the show we played with them the night before they were supposed to play *Gilman* because they loved them and were bummed that they weren't going

to see them the next night. But I guess the fact that they were in talks with a bigger label made them less of a great band somehow. So instead, you had other bands play, and played the *DEAD BOYS*, *RAMONES*, *BLACK FLAG*, and other groups that *Gilman* employees worship in-between the bands. All major label bands; brilliant.

I understand the policy. I understand the reason for the policy. I actually support the policy. It makes sense for *Gilman*. Believe me, I had been working at *Gilman St.* for years when you were getting turned on to punk by *Green Day*'s third full length (oh, and thanks for the *Raw Power* thing, that's obviously makes you a better "punk" than me), and there was a purpose for it then. It seems to be more of a mission now. Yeah, I know, you were all jaded by '94-'96. Get over it. Shows are starting to get great again, and the scene and bands that are still in it deserve more than that. Having people walk around with chips on their shoulders about something that happened a half decade ago is pointless. So now you are on this crusade to re-make punk in your vision and save us all. You should hang out with Chris Hall (*Gilman*'s head booker; the guy's been around for a while) a little more. He understands what *Gilman* is all about. He still tries to book shows with lots of different types of music. He still tries to help up-and-coming Bay Area bands. He still puts shows together for the Bay Area whether he likes a band's style or not. You have bookers there who have been quoted as saying, "I only book bands that I like". It's not your damn club. It's the East Bay punk scene's club. It's my club. It's everybody who comes to membership meetings club. Big surprise, they might not all have the same taste as you. Booking bands that only you like should be reserved for your own personal club when you get it up and running. You, Jake, personally said that my band shouldn't be able to play there because I wrote a column supporting *Green Day* playing there a few months ago. Am I not supposed to have an opinion? Is your new version of an "ideal" punk-dom a non-thinking, conformist, "think as I think, do as I tell you" version? That's just what we need, a perfect way to turn the almighty underground of free thinkers and open minds into another aspect of society's dregs. Like I said, if you insist on walking around with a chip on your shoulder, you should look into death-rock. This scene is way too small and fragile to have that shit

pumped into it. The funniest thing is, if you have a problem with what I write, come up and talk to me about it. I see you walking down Telegraph, or at the club and it's always "Hey Brett, what's up?". Now I can look forward to the "um..., uh..., your band can't play here anymore because I wrote a letter to your magazine and you responded with thoughts that are outside of our allowed thinking process." Is that what's coming? Please keep me posted, and if you can't just tell me, when you see me, I guess you can put it in your next column, er, "letter".

Bridge 9. Without a doubt, the biggest, best, and most productive new hardcore label out there. Every other magazine is talking about it. All the kids in the chat rooms are talking about it. I am not supposed to talk about it because of my band's affiliation with it? Give me a break. First off, I've been writing about B9 since before we even approached Chris/B9 with a demo. We asked him to put out our record because we loved his label. I put out a magazine because I love music. Am I not supposed to talk about music I love, in the format I created just for that purpose, because you might have a problem with it? Not likely. In the last issue, I talked about 4 new releases that Bridge 9 had just put out. They had just put 8 releases out! Hell, I talked about ALL of Equal Vision's new releases in the same column. Apparently, we must be getting ready to switch labels. But, oh, wait, I blew it by talking about Converge. Once again, thanks for your insight on Walls Of Jericho. Your column was much better than mine was. And thanks for the list of bands that blow away American Nightmare. Interesting list. Some of those bands are great, and I have talked about them at length. Some of those bands just plain suck. That's my opinion. The funniest damn part of it is that if American Nightmare stopped taking showers, started dressing in all-black, and donned headbands while they played, you would swear it was the second coming of Christ! So are you into punk, or punk fashion?

Like I said, I'm not surprised that you are having differences of opinions with what *Hit List* is stating. The thing that surprises me is that you still read it. Wouldn't issue #1 have been enough to let you know that we are not your type of magazine? Yet every other time I saw you it was "Hey Brett, do you have the new *Hit*



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List on you?" Sure, here it is, enjoy. Just like the guy who was bitching last issue about our content. There are lots of magazines out there. If there isn't one out here that suits your needs, start one. I hope it does well. I too am starting a new magazine. Hit List contains part of my ideals, but not all of them, so I will be launching a new hardcore magazine called State Of Grace in early spring. I am all for people getting their opinions and thoughts out there, as it is supposed to encourage open-mindedness and be thought provoking. It's a lot of damn work, but the end result is that you can talk about whatever bands you want, regardless of whether they are on a label you are on, or if they are on Interscope. It's freedom of expression, and it's one of the foundations that not only punk was based on, but the Gilman St. Project as well.

I will get you the new magazine when it comes out, so in your next column you can tell everybody about all the bands that you think are better than the ones I mentioned.

I'll see you at the club,

-Brett Mathews

## THE ILLUSION OF HAVING SOMETHING TO SAY

Dear Hit List:

I have had a copy of *Hit List* on my desk for over a year (June/July 2000), but haven't had the time to respond to an article printed in your magazine, "The Illusion of St. Mark's Place", in which the author, to whom I do not want to give any name recognition, meandered on about the subject of St. Mark's Place being a false mecca for punk rock due to all its commercialism and poseurs. The article really should have been called, "What I think about stuff". First of all, the fact that St. Mark's Place is commercial and full of poseurs is not a revelation. In fact, I read an article in 1979 or 1980 in *New York* magazine, in which a punk on St. Mark's declared to the author, "No one shops on St. Mark's anymore. It's a tourist trap." People have long been complaining about the prices at Trash and Vaudeville, probably from before the author of the article was born. Don't you have to do a LITTLE research to call yourself a journalist/writer? I lived on St. Mark's and 2nd Avenue in the early 80's, when they closed the St. Mark's Theater

and opened a Gap in its place. I bet the author was in diapers then, whence my friends and I stole his then fledgling thoughts about how this was the end of St. Mark's and the punk rock world as we know it.

The second annoying set of declarations were made against my former establishment, Coney Island High. He first talks about all the "profits" we were making, then turns around and says we "didn't bother to pay our rent". Aside from the fact that I invested and lost \$100,000 of my family's money into that joint so that snot-nosed music "journalists" could call us at the office to get into the club for free says a little more about us putting our money into what we believed in. We kept \$2.50 Bud beer prices and \$5 and \$7 ticket prices for ALL AGES SHOWS every day of the week because we wanted to have a clubhouse for kids like us who wanted to go to some great shows. You can bet that when Iggy asks for \$10K, we are going to sell 500 \$20 tickets rather than have the show go to Irving Plaza (do the math, add in paying 10 security men, a sound person, a stage manager, and a door person, and you can see all the "profits" we got from that show). We did the same for Social Distortion, the Ramones' farewell tour, and many others because we thought fans would rather be in an overcrowded Coney seeing our rock and roll heroes where they were ALLOWED to photograph them, video them, and even sneak backstage and do interviews with them for their fanzines, than go to a 2500-person venue where you need binoculars to see the show and have to deal with asshole security.

Poor kid! I feel SO sorry for him. He obviously knew ALL the issues, since he said it was because we "hadn't bothered to pay our rent" that we closed. In fact, for the month of July 1999, I paid our rent IN ADVANCE, and our landlord had to return it when the padlock was put on July 2, 1999. Your wise author had to wait outside for two hours while I ran up an \$800 cell phone bill to get that show reopened by the Supreme Court of New York at 8:30 PM on a Friday on Fourth of July weekend, and we did it. Even our lawyers thought it was impossible. I made them stay in court instead of running away to the Hamptons so we wouldn't let down the fans, the band, and their booking agent. THAT'S dedication. The cops gave us until 9 PM - we got the court

order faxed over at 9:07. The later Slackers show went on, but due to the seven minute delay, the cops would not let us do the early show. This is the crap I went through to keep the place open and keep the shows going during that July, and during the many other times we were under seige from the Task Force on Nightlife. Even after we lost our appeal five days later. He complains of going back to his boring little town and having to come back for a refund. Stay in your boring town. I bet this kid has a TON of shows to go to now in the MANY all-ages venues here in Manhattan.

He complains about Rudy Guiliani's "New" New York, but doesn't realize that THAT is why I had a half hour's notice when the authorities showed up and put a padlock on our door. I was told by the cops to my face at a community meeting that we were on a shutdown list and there was nothing they could do. The goon squad even falsified papers and charges against us in many of their raids. Only one time did we win in our hearing, because it's usually some cops or fireman's word against the "punks", but one time we get a judge who believed us and saw the phony modifications to the deptment's paperwork. A journalist from *Time Out* asked me very pointedly, "Well SOME people think you guys are having so much trouble because of your 'fuck you' attitude, don't you think?". I think he was working for the city, but at least this journalist tried to get "facts" from the people involved, even though he had already made up his mind.

The Club NEVER made money. When I took over, it went from losing money to breaking even, but we did it OUR way, which is the most punk rock way to do things, I suppose. We put about a quarter of a million dollars on the line to prove it, rather than just crank out a page of recycled ideas in a fanzine (insert Starbucks complaint ten years after other writers inserted Gap complaint here). If any real writer interested in what really happened wants to talk to me, they can, but MOST writers I've seen write on the Coney subject don't bother to talk to anyone who actually owned it because they like their own ideas better. And to those "in the know" who wrote that we sold out to Burger King, where is that Burger King now? The site that was once Coney is STILL unoccupied. To quote your brilliant, thought-provoking writer, "Good



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riddance" indeed. We didn't need kids like that writer anyway. If only people like him had to pay fines for the lies and inaccuracies they put in print - fines which could then be put into "reopen[ing] a cool rock and roll club run by kids for kids fund" - we'd be back in business.

I'm STILL battling with problems having to do with Coney, some caused by our patrons, even NOW. I even mailed kids refunds to shows out of my own pocket, so if your writer is pissed that he was out of the train fare to go back to his boring little town because we closed, have him send me the receipt. I'll be glad to pay it to make sure he stays there. Since he detested my last club so much, I'll make sure when I open another one that he never visits it.

Yours sincerely,  
Lindsey Anderson  
Co-owner  
Coney Island High, 1995-1999

Dear Lindsey:

*Thanks for clarifying these matters and setting the record straight, as well as for recently turning me on to that good, cheap Indian restaurant in NYC's "Indian Alley." As for me, all I can say is that I loved going to Coney Island High during the two years when I was teaching at Columbia University and living in Manhattan, not only to see cool live bands (like the Wretched Ones) but also to attend the regular "Green Door" record-spinning nights. As for Jeff Alexander's piece, it was basically a rant-filled opinion column - as you put it, an appropriate title would have been "What I Think About Stuff" - not a research-oriented piece of investigative journalism (like his other articles in Hit List). Having said that, I appreciate your efforts to shed some light on the problems of running a club in the Big Apple.*

-Jeff Bale

## REQUIEM FOR GEORGE

I will state categorically that George was by far the coolest Beatle. McCartney was basically a lightweight with an admittedly great sense of melody. Ringo was basically a lovable idiot. Lennon had a lot of talent, but it seems as if he treated everyone around him like shit. George neither gave nor

took any bullshit like that. He was cooler than John Lennon and handsomer too. Lennon would give George crap about his guitar playing (and it's true that George was the last man on earth to discover the fuzz box and the wah-wah pedal), but George was really a damned good guitarist, certainly a lot better than Lennon. If Lennon is a sort of musical analog to James Dean, then George might very well be Humphrey Bogart. It really kills me that even in death George somehow seems to get upstaged.

George endorsed the same radically non-violent political ideology that Lennon made into a media crusade. But in actual fact the Beatles were never more political than on "Taxman" - one of George's songs. If anything, George's political and spiritual ideals were even further Left than Lennon's. But George never made such a big deal about it. He never wore a slogan on a placard in the bathtub with a live TV feed. He never rammed his politics down uncertain throats. Although the man practically invented the mega-celebrity charity concert (back when "Live Aid" was not yet even a glint in Sir Bob Geldof's pre-pubescent eye), he never "made the scene," he pretty much kept to himself. He had too much class for the brutal world of entertainment. I will state categorically that I can think of no precedent in all of pop culture of a star of Harrison's virtually world-dominating status who ever lived such a humble and unassuming life. At least I couldn't think of one.

George was the one who answered an interview question by affirming: Yes, I do believe that all you need is love. No, I don't think it's foolish or naive."

George was also quoted as saying: "You know? It's nice to get old." There were no other pop stars in the 1970's who had the qualities of maturity and/or understanding to accept the aging process. The prevailing philosophy hearkened to "Hope I die before I get old," etc. From Elvis to Townshend to Paul Westerberg, that philosophy has proven disastrous for both the individuals involved and the culture at large. George had all of this stuff figured out sooner than almost anybody.

Eventually, the revisionists will have a field day pointing out that although George was only allowed two songs per album, many of the most vital tracks were indeed his compositions. I'm

thinking of "Love You To," "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," "I, Me, Mine," "Within You and Without You," "If I Needed Someone," "It's Only a Northern Song," "Blue Jay Way," "I Want To Tell You," "Think For Yourself," and "Something." Strong competition for Lennon and McCartney, and this leaves out the fact that George wrote some really amazing post-Beatle stuff as well. He never really got the full measure of credit he deserved.

No one could ever accuse George of having been a crybaby. He took his lumps and then some. Even when in great pain he always seemed to try to "turn the other cheek." He was cuckolded: his junkie guitarist friend Eric Clapton stole his wife. Did George make a fuss? No he did not. Then he was robbed and stabbed. Then he got cancer (from cigarettes, he said). Still, George never asked for pity or even attention. And it still kills me that Lennon upstaged George once again in death because getting assassinated on a New York streetcorner is so much "sexier" than dying quietly away from media.

George didn't rage against the machine, he tried to see the machine's attributes. When death came, he did not rage against the dying of the light. He went not just gently, but gracefully.

In recent years, George played in the Travelling Wilburys; cut the occasional solo album; and helped produce certain Monty Python-associated film projects. If George had not even been a member of the Beatles, we would still owe him a great debt for his helping Terry Gilliam fund "Brazil," easily among the 25 best movies ever made. George aptly named his film-production company "Handmade Films." I always thought that name was low-key and cool, just like George.

I always thought he was the coolest and the handsomest and the best as a human being.

-Paul K.

Dear Paul:

*I basically agree with your assessment above, although his later "spiritual turn" definitely put me off. And it's hard to even imagine the BEATLES without Lennon's razor-sharp wit.*

-Jeff Bale ✦



## CALL ME A "WARMONGER," BUT...

**I** enthusiastically support the actions that the American government has thus far taken in its campaign against Islamist terrorist networks and their protectors. The only serious criticism I have so far is in relation to the sadly indecisive later phase of the military campaign in Afghanistan, during the course of which we stupidly allowed hundreds (if not thousands) of seemingly trapped al-Qai'dah fighters to escape from the Tora Bora and Malawi cave complexes by failing to position elements of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division along the Afghan side of the Afghan-Pakistani border in order to interdict their retreat. It seems certain that many of these escapees, especially the foreign volunteers (the so-called "Afghan Arabs") will soon renew their fight against the "infidel" West, either inside Afghanistan itself or elsewhere, when the circumstances again appear propitious. For this reason I very much fear that our risk-averse political leaders will as usual be tempted to proclaim "victory" and end the campaign prematurely now that they've toppled the Taliban regime and smashed Ibn Ladin's operational base in Afghanistan, just as they foolishly did during the Gulf War, when they allowed Saddam Husayn to remain in power after the annihilation of the Iraqi army. What, then, still remains to be done (other than avoiding further civilian and U.S./allied casualties caused by errant bombs or misdirected raids and preventing any more hardline fighters from escaping across the Afghan border into Pakistan's two untamed — and perhaps untamable — border territories, the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan)?

What we need to do, quite simply, is hunt down and physically eliminate all the leading members of al-Qa'idah and its satellite organizations so as to destroy, once and for all, their capacity to carry out complex and destructive terrorist operations like the one on 11 September. (It appears that Muhammad Atif and four or five other senior operational planners have already been sent on their way to the Qur'anic Paradise, as has Taliban intelligence chief and purported torturer Qari Ahmadullah. But plenty of others still remain to be rounded up and/or killed, including Ibn Ladin himself, his top lieutenant Ayman al-Zuwahiri, logistics expert Abu Zubaydah, Taliban "spiritual" leader Muhammad Omar, and a dozen or so other top al-Qai'dah operatives, not to mention hundreds or thousands of lower-level members of the group. Certain other key figures, including al-Qai'dah terrorist trainer Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi and Taliban spokesperson Abdul Salam Zaef, are now in the custody of the U.S. military.) Although nothing can be done to prevent deluded individual fanatics from strapping a bomb onto their bodies and detonating it in a public place, as the Israelis have learned the hard way,

we can in fact do much to prevent the successful launching of highly-sophisticated and particularly destructive assaults by eliminating the few truly dangerous enemy operatives who are actually capable of planning and organizing them. This complex and difficult counterterrorist and counterintelligence task, which will probably take several years, needs to be vigorously pursued at home and abroad.

## JEFF BALE READ BETWEEN THE LINES



## What, then, still remains to be done?

On the domestic front, remaining terrorist "sleeper" cells need to be uprooted, a plethora of seemingly innocuous cultural and financial front organizations set up by Islamist terror supporters have to be dismantled, and the ongoing infiltration and manipulation of more moderate Muslim groups by Islamist extremists must be exposed and curtailed. These are the sorts of very serious internal security threats that presently confront Russia, China, and the entire Western world (including Europe, Canada, and Australia), not simply America. I find it astonishing that it took so long for the federal government to crack down on bogus firms like the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, which was correctly identified as a HAMAS front group by investigators several years ago. Many other equally duplicitous and indeed subversive

Islamist organizations have likewise been publicly exposed over the past decade, yet it was only after an event as catastrophic as the 11 September attacks that our security forces were prompted to initiate long overdue actions against them. In response to such belated crack-downs, some misguided civil libertarians — whether of the genuine or phony variety — fell all over themselves sounding the alarm and crying foul despite knowing nothing at all about the very real dangers posed by Islamist networks operating inside the United States. Although all of us must remain vigilant so as to expose and curtail possible government mistreatment of innocent people, every sensible person surely recognizes that one of the most basic and legitimate functions of any government worthy of the name is protecting its own citizens from foreign attack. Even the more radical yet rational proponents of limited government, whether they be libertarians or anarchists, recognize that all human societies must develop



institutions to protect their own members from physical harm. Just as no one in his right mind would refuse to call the fire department if his house was on fire or the police department if he was threatened by violent criminals, so too no rational person should object to government actions that are specifically and carefully designed to protect his loved ones from the very real threats posed by foreign-born saboteurs or terrorists — no matter how concerned such a person might be about preserving individual liberties. I may well return to the thorny issue of domestic security in my next column.

On the international front, it's about time we faced the fact that the West will probably never be able to win the "hearts and minds" of the majority of the world's Muslims, both because of actual injustices we have perpetrated against the Islamic world in the past and because of supposed "crimes" which they falsely attribute to us nowadays in order to cope with, and compensate for, their acute collective sense of political, military, economic, and scientific — if not cultural — inferiority. One illustrative manifestation of this widespread Muslim inclination to blame others for their loss of cultural predominance and subsequent failure to keep up with the West, most of which is clearly due to their own stubborn adherence to increasingly obsolete and dysfunctional cultural traditions, is their concoction and uncritical acceptance of a host of bizarre conspiracy theories that attribute all or most of their current problems to sinister plots hatched and carried out by supposedly malevolent enemies of Islam, in particular Jews, Christians, and "godless" Westerners. (Who can forget, for example, the widespread Muslim acceptance of the claim that Israeli intelligence secretly planned and launched the 11 September attacks in order to precipitate a war between the West and the Islamic world? Indeed, as recently as 27 February 2002, *USA Today* featured a banner headline reading "In poll, Islamic world says Arabs not involved in 9/11"!!!!) These Muslim conspiracy theories, though often based (like many other types of conspiracy theories) upon small grains of truth, are no less pernicious or ridiculous than those propounded by white supremacists about Jews and "mud people," those generated by black nationalists about "white devils," or those promoted by Hitler and his cronies about the Jews and Freemasons. As a matter of fact, many scurrilous anti-Semitic motifs that are now commonplace throughout the Islamic world are themselves derived in large part from Nazi-era propaganda themes, thanks in part to the emigration of wanted Nazi war criminals to Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and other Arab countries after World War II. Others have been borrowed from postwar neo-fascists and Holocaust deniers.

Most people who are presently unaware of the virulently anti-Western and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories which have long been systematically peddled by Arab governments, official and unofficial media outlets (including radio stations and newspapers — the highly-biased but independent Qatar-based al-Jazirah [The Peninsula] radio station is itself an excellent example, since it is run by Islamists and pan-Arab "socialists" who hate the

West), political pamphlets, school textbooks, religious preachers, Muslim websites, and supposedly "respectable" international organizations like the Saudi-financed Rabitat al-'Alam al-Islami (World Muslim League), would no doubt be shocked to learn just how loony and malicious most of these theories actually are. Only difficult language barriers, along with a good deal of wishful thinking, keep most Westerners from discovering what Muslims abroad are really saying about them and accusing them of, which stands in marked contrast to the often conciliatory and misleadingly sanitized claims proffered by ostensibly "moderate" Muslim spokespersons living in the West, such as those representing the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) or the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination League. As incredible as it may seem, many of these same hate-filled Islamist propaganda peddlers then have the audacity to turn around and complain about supposed "anti-Muslim" propaganda in the West. This is basically equivalent to the Jew-baiting Nazi Propaganda Ministry accusing Jewish refugees in Britain and America of slandering Germany! Indeed, it's a little known fact that certain Muslim organizations have long been among the primary publishers — and at times perhaps the principal publishers — of both the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an anti-Semitic screed forged by the Tsarist Okhrana, and much of today's Holocaust denial literature. For an illuminating analysis of the conspiracy theories so prevalent in the Muslim world, see Daniel Pipes, *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998). For translated examples of the often bizarre but all too typical rants emanating from the Muslim world, see Yossef Bodansky, *Islamic Anti-Semitism as a Political Instrument* (Houston: Freeman Center for Strategic Studies, 1999); and Adam Parfrey, ed., *Extreme Islam: Anti-American Propaganda of Muslim Fundamentalism* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2001).

Since we cannot persuade most Muslims to love us no matter what we do — short of allowing the state of Israel to be destroyed, permitting one ruthless Muslim potentate or another to control much of the world's oil supply, providing the Dar al-Islam with billions of dollars of foreign aid with no strings attached, and repudiating our "godlessness" or Christian "crusader" mentality by converting to Islam — the next best thing is to have them fear us. The sad truth is that overt displays of power count for almost everything in that part of the world, especially if tough words are backed up by swift and decisive action. Although the dispossessed Muslim masses do indeed yearn for a better quality of life than their own incompetent and corrupt leaders are able or willing to provide them, it has to be recognized that — apart from some thin, intersecting strata of Westernized intellectuals — there are virtually no genuine proponents of pluralism and democracy in the Muslim world. Moreover, of all the anti-democratic forces in the Middle East and South Asia, fanatical Islamists, like their intolerant, sectarian religious counterparts elsewhere, are clearly the *least* democratic, even though they sometimes claim to accept democratic processes, for purely tactical reasons, when they are *not* in power. These Islamist movements therefore highlight, in the starkest possible terms, the central conundrum of democratic politics — what should



be done when more or less popular *anti-democratic* forces are elected to power via democratic means, in the process threatening the survival of the democratic system itself?

In fact, despite the fact that some academics foolishly continue to whitewash their true motives and goals, it is absurd to try and portray these intrinsically authoritarian and anti-pluralist Islamist movements as new variants of “democratic” social protest movements comparable to earlier, largely secular Third World “anti-colonial” or “national liberation” movements (most of which, though all too often similarly viewed through rose-colored glasses by Western intellectuals, were also anything but democratic). As Anat Lapidot has rightly pointed out, “The *tactics* [emphasis added] of most groups who seek an Islamic solution to their societies’ social and political problems changed in the latter half of the 1980s, from unalterably opposing western notions of democracy to waging democratic campaigns against their states’ authoritarian regimes...Islam[ist] movements came to the realization that under present conditions the best way to gain power was by participation in open elections. They learned to use the system they opposed. This is in contrast to the belief of the early 1980s that the only way to achieve power was through violent revolution.” Thus, like their counterparts in the thoroughly anti-democratic Marxist-Leninist and fascist movements before them, today’s Islamist radicals have learned how to exploit

“bourgeois” democratic processes in order to promote and achieve their radically anti-democratic goals, not only in the “controlled democratic” Muslim states of the Middle East and South Asia., but also in the West. They have even adopted the tried and true communist (and at times fascist) tactics of establishing “national front” organizations incorporating other, non-Islamist opposition groups, infiltrating the security services and state apparatus, and providing “education” and social services to the poor and disenfranchised. Yet nothing would be more foolish than to assume that, should they come to power outright or become coalition partners in the wake of successes at the ballot box, Islamist activists will seek to preserve democratic institutions and continue to operate in accordance with democratic principles. It is for this very reason that ruling Muslim regimes have not infrequently preferred to suspend elections altogether rather than allow Islamists to enter the corridors of power under false pretenses. This is because, unlike so many naïve academics and journalists in the West, they recognize the subversive, totalitarian agendas that lie beneath these pseudo-democratic Islamist facades. For further evidence of this, see the two articles we’ve reprinted in this issue concerning the real

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agendas of the Islamist fanatics who have unfortunately found a safe haven in the West.

What all this means in actual practice is that the United States and its European allies will need to overthrow or otherwise neutralize several loathsome regimes which continue to aid and abet — overtly or covertly — al-Qai’dah and other terrorist networks. The first domino that needs to fall is Saddam Husayn’s regime, not only because the Iraqi secret service has at times surreptitiously ‘collaborated with known Islamist (and secular) terrorists, but also because Husayn has to be unseated before his extensive arsenal of chemical and biological weapons becomes any larger and more sophisticated. The Bush Administration has recently given him an ultimatum about letting the United Nations weapons inspectors back in,

and if he refuses outright or promotes bogus compromise initiatives — as he almost certainly will — we should simply invade Iraq and finish the job we started back in 1991. Once the U.S. has managed to destroy both the obscurantist Taliban regime in Afghanistan — in many ways the toughest nut to crack — and the most powerful and dangerous secular Arab regime in Iraq, it should be relatively easy to deal with any remaining threats posed by tinpot dictators in places like Libya, Syria, and the Sudan. The situation in

## ***Today’s Islamist radicals have learned how to exploit “bourgeois” democratic processes in order to promote and achieve their radically anti-democratic goals.***

Iran is considerably more delicate, however. Although the Iranian government still poses a noteworthy threat insofar as its covert sponsorship of terrorism is concerned, the regime’s systematic use of terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy has gradually abated and the clerical hardliners who remain in charge are increasingly unpopular, especially with younger Iranians. There, our efforts should be directed toward strengthening moderately pro-Western opposition forces, at least covertly, and thereby impede Iran from continuing to foment terrorist plots and shelter wanted terrorists. (This eminently sensible approach was unfortunately undercut by Bush’s stupidly misdirected “Axis of Evil” speech. If he wished to warn the Iranian and North Korean governments not to deploy or use weapons of mass destruction, he should have done so through diplomatic back channels so as to avoid a public anti-American reaction.)

Once the most belligerent, anti-Western states in the region realize that the costs of facilitating, enabling, or sponsoring terrorism far outweigh the potential benefits that may accrue to them, we can then focus our attention on helping friendlier governments destroy violently subversive groups such as al-Takfir wa al-Hijrah (Excommunication and Emigration) throughout Muslim



# HIT SQUAD

North Africa, HAMAS and Islamic Jihad in Palestine, Hizb'allah (or, in Farsi, Hezbollah) in Lebanon and elsewhere, Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Group in Egypt, the GIA and the even more extreme Groupe Salafiste pour Prédication et Combat (GSPC: Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting) in Algeria, the Abu Sayyaf (Bearer of Swords) organization in the Philippines, the Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM: Holy Warriors Association of Malaysia) and the Jemaah Islamiyah (Islamic Group) in Malaysia, Laskar Jihad (Holy War Forces) in Indonesia, remnants of the al-Ittihad al-Islamiyyah (Islamic Unity) cell in Somalia, and various other paramilitary organizations "with global reach" which not only openly advocate our destruction, but also directly threaten our physical security by organizing attacks against us.

Last but not least, we will eventually have to deal with our so-called "allies" in the Middle East and South Asia, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the very regimes which were primarily responsible for creating the Taliban and thereby precipitating the resulting mess in Afghanistan, the former by establishing and financing the Wahhabi *madrasahs* (religious seminaries) in Pakistan, the latter by arming and training the Taliban and at times even directing their military operations. It should never be forgotten that, just as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's thuggish Hezb-e Islami (Islamic Party) was the principal Afghan ally of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate and the Jamaat-e Islami (JI: Islamic Society), a "moderate" Pakistani Islamist party, during the anti-Soviet war, in the mid-1990s the newly-formed Taliban movement was not only allied to Maulana Fazlur Rahman's Jami'at-e Ulema-i Islam (JUI: Association of Islamic Clerics) party, but also to important elements within the Pakistani armed forces, the ISI, the Pakistani government, and the Baluchistan transport (i.e., smuggling) mafia. Until very recently, Pakistan's security agencies have also covertly aided Islamist terrorist groups based in both Pakistan proper (such as the Jaysh-e Muhammad or Army of Muhammad, whose leaders were implicated in the Daniel Pearl kidnapping and murder) and in the disputed border region of Jammu and Kashmir, such as the Harkat ul-Mujahidin (Holy Warrior Movement) and Lashkar-e Islam (Islamic Forces), which have long been carrying out violent attacks against non-Muslim civilians and detachments of the Indian Army. Nor should it be forgotten that the illiterate Pushtun tribesmen who later became Taliban leaders had previously been indoctrinated (in Saudi-financed religious schools inside Pakistan) with the strict, puritanical Saudi version of fundamentalist Islam promoted by 18th-century theorist Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, or that anti-Western factions within Saudi intelligence (headed by Prince Turki al-Faysal prior to his dismissal as intelligence chief in August 2001) and wealthy members of anti-Sudayri branches of the Saudi royal family (most notably, Crown Prince 'Abd 'Allah) provided covert financial assistance to al-Qai'dah. With "friends" like these, who needs "enemies"? Now that the military campaign in Afghanistan appears to be coming to

a close, however bloody it has been in recent days, we should prepare to inform General Pervez Musharraf and King Fahd ibn 'Abd al-Aziz that we will no longer tolerate their countries' continued financing and sheltering of Islamist ultras, in particular members of transnational terrorist groups that have already carried out, or are currently plotting to carry out, attacks against American citizens, whether at home or overseas.

There are no legitimate reasons why the United States and its allies should not continue to carry out military operations against transnational Islamist terrorist groups and their identifiable state supporters in the manner I have described above. All of the moral and political objections against conducting a war against terrorism that have been raised by "peace activists," whether these peaceniks be authentic or bogus, can easily be disposed of.

For example, "anti-war" protestors have been arguing ever since 11 September that waging a war against al-Qai'dah and its Taliban protectors in Afghanistan was "unjust" because it would lead to innocent civilian deaths. The simple truth is that, no matter how much particular warring parties try to avoid causing them, a certain number of civilian casualties are now — and have always been — inevitable when wars are waged, which effectively means that, should one accept such a simpleminded criterion for opposing war, no war could ever be considered "just," including those waged in self-defense. Perhaps, then, the United States should not have intervened in World War II against the Axis powers, even though such a foolish decision would have almost certainly led to the conquest of Europe and Russia by Nazi Germany and the conquest of the Pacific Rim (and perhaps also of China) by the Empire of Japan. Moreover, had the U.S. not intervened, the egregious loss of human life that would have resulted from the unimpeded warfare between the Axis and Allies would have been far greater than it actually was, especially given the German and Japanese propensity for subjecting civilian populations to systematic atrocities.

This leads me to my first point, namely, that non-intervention often leads to far more injustices, crimes, and civilian deaths than military intervention and the actual waging of war. Such was clearly the case in Afghanistan, where international aid organizations have since estimated that the number of civilian deaths resulting from interdictions in the flow of international aid by the Taliban, not to mention its ongoing public executions and assassinations of opponents, would have been in the hundreds of thousands had not the U.S. so quickly unseated the Taliban regime, helped to establish a new government, and restored some measure of physical security on the ground, especially in the chief cities. Even if one accepts the highest estimates of civilian casualties that are being bandied about by "peace activists" who are now professing so much "concern" about innocent Afghan deaths, i.e., 4000, the disparity between these two figures is astounding. The same was true of our intervention in the Balkans. Had the U.S. and its foot-dragging European allies not belatedly intervened in Bosnia and Kosovo, Serb ultranationalists would have carried out their vicious campaigns of "ethnic cleansing" on an even grander scale than they actually did. If ever an intervention served to limit innocent civilian deaths, it was NATO's efforts to prevent the establishment of Greater Serbia. Anyone who doesn't recognize this obvious fact is utterly ignorant of international political realities.



Secondly, the "rules of engagement" established by American commanders for the Afghanistan theatre were so strict that, far from reflecting a lack of concern about the loss of innocent civilian lives, the application of those rules seriously interfered with our primary military objective: the elimination of high-ranking enemy operatives. On several occasions, when we had golden opportunities to kill Mullah Omar or other top Taliban and al-Qai'dah leaders with high-tech ordinance, our pilots were *not allowed to launch attacks* because the designated targets were located in densely-populated urban areas. (So much for the ridiculous and unsubstantiated claim by one mentally retarded peace activist on the Berkeley campus, who argued that we were deliberately targeting Afghan civilians! Let's get real here: if the U.S. military had really wanted to cause civilian casualties, they had the technical means to be able to slaughter millions of Afghan noncombatants. Obviously, nothing of the sort was ever intended, much less initiated.)

Thirdly, so-called peace activists often resort to the dopey slogan "Justice, Not Revenge," apparently without realizing that vengeance and justice are sometimes the very same thing. Parenthetically, this is the same error that is committed over and over again by knee-jerk opponents of the death penalty. For some reason, one of the oldest and most valid prescriptions for rendering justice — "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" — is now considered unjust. Rather than accepting the need to mete out the same sort of severe treatment that violent criminals have blithely administered to their innocent victims, including death in the case of murder, much of the morally relativistic Western intelligentsia now feels that the guilty are somehow being treated "unjustly" if they receive the very punishments that they so richly deserve. (Here I should emphasize that I too am opposed to the death penalty, except in cases where the material guilt of the perpetrator is incontrovertible.) The simple truth is that, conspiracy theorists to the contrary, the last thing that any American wanted to do on 10 September was to wage a war in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the very next day a vicious, fanatical enemy, whose leaders were sheltered by an odious regime in that country, carried out a murderous act of war on American soil. We were therefore compelled to disrupt our normal lives and respond by punishing the perpetrators of this heinous deed, just as someone whose wife was raped and murdered would feel compelled to exact justice upon the perpetrator(s). Even after 11 September, Bush repeatedly gave the Taliban opportunities to avoid war if only they would agree to destroy terrorist training camps and bases and turn over Ibn Ladin and other al-Qai'dah personnel, which they stubbornly and stupidly refused to do. This left the United States with no option but to commence military operations against Afghanistan. Far from being "unjust" to carry out reprisals against those who were responsible for visiting death and destruction upon innocent American civilians in our own homeland, it would *really* have been unjust to let the organizers of that deed escape unpunished. In this case, achieving justice and satisfying psychological urges for revenge proved to be virtually identical.

Alas, even more extreme responses may soon become necessary if Islamist terrorists carry out future attacks

using weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and end up killing hundreds of thousands or even millions of Americans, an event I consider to be practically inevitable. The only question in my mind is *when* such an attack will actually occur, not *if* it will. Since there is no way to provide 100% physical security against terrorist attacks, even in police states, perhaps we need to make it perfectly clear to would-be terrorists — and elements within hostile foreign regimes that may be inclined to collaborate with them — that if such an attack is ever carried out on American soil, a massive U.S. retaliation against their countries of origin will be our inevitable response. Some experts have argued that such an extreme response, no matter how devastating, would not serve to deter religious terrorists who are ready, willing, and able to die for their causes. Perhaps so, but even fanatics who have no qualms about perishing themselves for their causes tend to be deeply concerned about the fates of their immediate families and extended kin, especially in collectivistic societies with a quasi-tribal or tribal social structure. This has repeatedly been demonstrated in the past. It may be recalled, for example, that the Jordanian secret service snatched the family members of key terrorists associated with the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) and used them as leverage to force them to turn themselves in, with the result that the core of the ANO was dismantled in little more than six months. Would 11 September ringleader Muhammad Atta have been willing to fly a passenger jet into the World Trade Center if he had been convinced that his father, mother, siblings, and cousins would be hunted down and executed afterwards? No one can say for sure. But one could argue that potential suicide bombers should be made aware beforehand that if they intentionally carry out attacks that kill innocent Americans, they will essentially be signing the death warrants of their own families and perhaps also — should they decide to employ WMDs — bringing about the annihilation of their entire nations. However harsh such a policy may seem, the likely alternative — our own destruction — is far worse.

## CALL ME A "COMMIE," BUT...

...I am almost entirely opposed to the policies that the Bush Administration is promoting with regard to matters unrelated to the War Against Terrorism. It should be apparent to everyone who examines the fine print that Bush's so-called "stimulus package" is little more than a corporate welfare scheme designed to reward major Republican campaign contributors, not to mention Bush's own cronies in the energy business. Speaking of said cronies, it appears that the President and Vice President are doing everything in their power to forestall comprehensive official investigations into the financial collapse of Enron, whose "good old boy" directors stole millions of dollars from their own employees and investors even as they awarded themselves huge bonuses and salary increases. On one level, this sort of behavior is all too typical of corporate America, but on the other Enron's CEOs



are even more shameless and unscrupulous than most.

I'm also very unhappy with Bush's decision to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and press on with his plan to develop an elaborate and absurdly expensive anti-ballistic missile defense system. Here we have a perfect example of the Maginot Line syndrome, i.e., putting our faith and resources into an elaborate defensive system which is not only easily circumvented, but is designed exclusively to ward off a threat we aren't even likely to face. If 11 September has demonstrated anything, it's that the primary threat to our country stems not from the launching of enemy missiles equipped with nuclear warheads or warheads filled with virulent biological or chemical agents, but rather from the covert delivery of such weapons of mass destruction. What we should be doing now is spending the billions of dollars that Bush wants to waste on the construction of ground-based anti-missile shields (and, eventually, space-based anti-missile platforms) to prepare instead for a covert terrorist attack using conventional radiological weapons, biological pathogens, and chemical agents. Among other things, this entails the stockpiling of vaccines, antibiotics, and antidotes, the establishment of an effective early warning detection system in medical facilities, an increase in the number of specially-trained decontamination units and, more generally, a vast improvement of the public health system in the United States.

This does not mean that we should ignore the possibility that various hostile foreign powers might seek to blackmail us into taking or not taking action in their spheres of influence by threatening to destroy one of our cities with a missile outfitted with WMDs. Such behavior would certainly not be above the governments of, say, North Korea or Iraq. However, even if one accepts the view that we must do something to forestall this potential danger, there are other types of anti-missile systems which are specifically designed to destroy missiles shortly after they have been launched rather than waiting until they close in on their designated targets. These ABM systems are not only purportedly cheaper, but the decision to use and position them would also require us to collaborate more closely with the Russians and Chinese instead of worsening our relations with those two key countries by blithely ignoring their strategic interests and unilaterally abandoning a long-standing treaty that has hitherto probably helped to inhibit nuclear exchanges. I suspect, however, that Bush is seeking to push through his preferred version of an ABM system mainly because it is *more* costly and will thus further enrich certain defense contractors.

Then there is the Bush Administration's counterproductive and ecologically unsound energy policy, which is based upon the exploitation of new but limited sources of oil in Alaska (and will, in the process, end up lining the pockets of his energy company buddies) rather than the permanent lessening of our dependence upon Middle Eastern oil by initiating various government-sponsored measures designed to curtail our excessive and often needless consumption of "black gold." The simplest way to do this would be for the government to *mandate* that the automobile industry immediately begin producing vehi-

cles with engines that get over 70 miles per gallon, since the technology for producing such fuel-efficient engines already exists. Forcing the automakers to make smaller, energy-efficient cars instead of allowing them to continue to foist gas-guzzling SUVs and trucks on the thoughtless public would do much to wean us off of our long-standing addiction to foreign oil (though, alas, it wouldn't allow the energy-deprived Europeans and Japanese to alleviate their dependence on Middle Eastern oil reserves). Not only are environmentalists right to urge us to protect the environment by driving more fuel-efficient vehicles, but certain conservatives are right to suggest that Americans who drive SUVs are "unpatriotic," knowingly or not, since collectively they play a major role in *increasing* our dependence upon foreign energy resources. Wouldn't we be better off if we could keep ourselves from being held hostage by OPEC nations and their greedy American corporate collaborators?

Nor are these the only policies of the current administration that I am diametrically opposed to. Needless to say, the less said about the ongoing government prosecution of the absurdly repressive and utterly counterproductive War on Drugs, the better. Note, e.g., the dimwitted television advertisements introduced during the Super Bowl, whose disingenuous message was that every American who takes drugs is unwittingly subsidizing and supporting international terrorism. These ads exemplify the manner in which the current Republican administration is seeking to exploit the War on Terrorism, an entirely legitimate enterprise, by linking it to other partisan policies that have little or nothing to do with the very real threat posed by Islamist terrorist networks. The sad reality is that our societal addictions to gas-guzzling cars and luxury items like diamonds are doing far more to subsidize Islamist terrorists than the drug trade. But don't expect to see any government-sponsored ads that blame everyone who owns an SUV or a diamond for unwittingly supporting international terrorism.

Finally, last issue I complained about the nauseating left-wing treacle emanating from the so-called "peace" movement. Alas, nowadays we are likewise being inundated with nauseating patriotic treacle in the form of endless flag waving, choruses of "God Bless America," sappy human interest stories about the direct and indirect victims of 11 September, appeals to maintain faith in God (wasn't that a primary characteristic of the hijackers themselves? I wouldn't have thought that any American would consider *them* worthy of emulation), and the like. The other day, after observing a truck festooned with no less than six American flags, I couldn't help but wonder whether the owner was really six times more patriotic than others with only one flag — or even no flags at all — on their vehicles. Please don't misunderstand me here. As far as I'm concerned, there's nothing at all wrong with loving one's country, providing one does so for the right reasons, or with rallying to defend it when it is attacked, as it recently was. This does not mean, however, that we should be forced to put up with incessant patriotic hucksterism or the ongoing "Oprah-ization" of national security issues and international politics. At gut-check times like these, we simply cannot afford to waste mental and physical energy engaging in amateur collective efforts to therapeutize or psychologize harsh political realities. We've got to face those realities directly and do some seri-



ous thinking and some serious butt-kicking, not continue to indulge in our unseemly and debilitating national pastimes of hand-wringing, whining, wallowing in victimhood, confessing our imagined sins, and crying in our beers. Let's arrest the ongoing societal trend toward weak-kneed infantilization and start growing up, shall we?

## OOPS!

I wrote last issue's column on the very eve of my departure for a three-week jaunt to New York where, among other things, I attended the final "Cavestomp" festival and visited the devastated World Trade Center site. Since I had lots of other last-minute things to attend to before I left, it was probably inevitable that I would make a few mistakes in my column due to haste. And indeed I did. First of all, the Arabic word *hamas*, also the acronym of the Islamist terrorist group Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (HAMAS: Islamic Resistance Movement) in Palestine, means "zeal," not "hope." I momentarily confused that term with the word *amal*, which happens to be the acronym of the Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah (AMAL: Lebanese Resistance Detachments), a Shi'ite militia in Lebanon. Second, the Arabic name of the Islamic Group in Egypt should have read — in accordance with subject-adjective gender agreement — al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah, not al-Jama'a al-Islami. Third, the Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (Society of the Muslim Brothers, better known as the Muslim Brotherhood) was founded in 1928, and therefore not (as I erroneously claimed) in the "first quarter of the 20th century." Fourth, the correct spelling of the name of the corrupt Islamist who received (thanks to the ISI) so much CIA largesse in Afghanistan is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, not "Gulbeddin." Finally, I left out the "i" in Egyptian leader Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir's name. (Alas, we were unable to figure out how to display the subscripted dot below certain Arabic consonants and the superscripted dash over certain long vowels.) I tried to correct the above errors shortly after I arrived in New York, but we had already gone to press. Sorry.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

I have no doubt whatsoever that most politically-minded Americans, when faced by dramatic and tragic events on the scale of the 11 September attacks, will be inclined — as per usual — to consult only those sources which reflect their pre-existing political biases and thereby reinforce their political prejudices. Knee-jerk rightists and conservatives will listen to right-wing talk radio, watch the Fox network, and rush out to buy *The Washington Times*, *National Review*, or *The Weekly Standard*, whilst knee-jerk leftists and left liberals will listen to NPR and Pacifica, watch CBS and CNN (for lack of a more "progressive" alternative), and rush out to buy the *Village Voice*, *Z Magazine*, *The Progressive*, and *The Nation*, as well as rants by Noam Chomsky and Alexander Cockburn. (I'm embarrassed to admit that some of our

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very own, otherwise perspicacious contributors have fallen into this latter trap, so much so that they've come to view the pronouncements of their ideological heroes almost as if they were sacred scriptures. When in doubt, the very first thing they seem to do is ask themselves what Noam or Howard Zinn would say — as if these biased polemicists were genuine experts on every subject under the sun — just as many Christians look uncritically to the Bible for inspiration and guidance!) Then, far from taking cognizance of the fact that possessing a little bit of one-sided knowledge is the mark of the semi-educated ideologue, they'll sit back with a smug, self-satisfied feeling and bask in their own imagined intellectual perspicacity and moral righteousness.

However, for the benefit of those readers who find contemporary Middle Eastern politics and Islamist terrorism somewhat hard to comprehend, and are actually curious and open-minded enough to want to examine a wider array of more specialized sources, I have decided to provide some helpful English-language bibliographic references. (There are, of course, numerous other materials in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and continental European languages.) The best general discussion of the unexpected resurgence of religiosity throughout the world, including the Islamic world, during the 1970s and 1980s is provided by Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the Modern World* (University Park: Penn State University, 1994). For an excellent historical, sociological, and ideological introduction to Islamism and its impact, see Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1996). For a brief but insightful analysis of the role played by the Sunni and Shi'i traditions in undergirding recent variants of Islamism, see Henry Munson, Jr., *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988). A good introduction to the whitewashing of Islamism by Western academics can be found in Martin Kramer, "The Mismeasure of Political Islam," in *The Islamism Debate* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1997); and idem, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, 2001). Informed examples of this sort of overly sympathetic interpretation of Islamism are provided by John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University, 1999); and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1998). For a journalistic overview of great power geopolitical rivalries in Central and South Asia, see Eric S. Margolis, *War at the Top of the World: The Struggle for Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Tibet* (New York: Routledge, 2000). For an insightful left-leaning analysis of the role played by the United States and other outside powers in supporting the anti-Soviet Islamist groups that later turned on the West, see John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto, 2000). Compare Astrid von Borcke, *Unforeseen Consequences of a Soviet*



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*Intervention: The Movement of the "Afghans" in Militant Islamism* (Cologne: Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1996). The best accounts of the Taliban movement can be found in Ahmed Rashid, *The Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University, 2000); and William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban* (New York: New York University, 1998). For more on Usamah ibn Ladin and al-Qai'dah, see Yonah Alexander & Michael S. Swetnam, *Usama bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational, 2001); the knowledgeable hardliner Yossef Bodansky, *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (New York: Prima, 2001); Simon Reeve, *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Ladin, and the Future of Terrorism* (Boston: Northeastern University, 1999); and Roland Jacquard, *In the Name of Osama Bin Ladin: Global Terrorism & the Bin Ladin Brotherhood* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2002). A fine insider's introduction to the brutal character and actual organization of the Iraqi regime is available in Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998). See also the academic study by Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University, 2000), especially chapter 6. For firsthand accounts of the most dangerous Iraqi weapons programs, see Khidhir Hamza, *Saddam's Bombmaker: The Daring Escape of the Man Who Built Iraq's Secret Weapons* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); and UNSCOM head Richard Butler, *The Greatest Threat: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Growing Crisis of Global Security* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001). For the alleged involvement of Iraqi intelligence in the 1993 (and possibly also the 2001) World Trade Center attacks, see the hawkish but problematic Laurie Mylroie, *The War Against America: Saddam Hussein and the World Trade Center Attacks. A Study of Revènge* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001). For the general problems presented by Islamist radicalism and violence, see Bruce Maddy-Weitzman & Efraim Inbar, eds., *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1997). For the early history of the Muslim Brotherhood, see the still definitive study by Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University, 1993 [1969]). For the role played by Iran in fostering international terrorism, see Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat* (Washington, DC: Seven Locks, 1993); and Edgar O'Ballance, *Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism, 1979-95: The Iranian Connection* (New York: New York University, 1997). For Hizb'allah, see Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University, 1997), and Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of*

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the *Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997). For HAMAS, see Shaul Mishal & Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University, 2000). For the Palestinian branch of Islamic Jihad, see Meir Hatina, *Islam and Salvation in Palestine: The Islamic Jihad Movement* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2001). An outstanding account of the development of the Islamist movement in Algeria, including the GIA, can be found in Martin Stone, *The Agony of Algeria* (New York: Columbia University, 1997). For the best introduction to the brutal war in Chechnya, see Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University, 1998). For the recent spread of Islamism in key areas of Central Asia, see Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University, 2002). On Islamist networks already operating here in America, see especially the article by Steven Emerson in Harvey Kushner, ed., *The Future of Terrorism: Violence in the New Millennium* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998); and idem, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002). I myself am currently working on an article dealing with overt and covert Islamist networks in Europe. By far the most acute "instant" analyses of the background, events, and impact of 11 September 2001 that have appeared to date are provided in James F. Hoge, Jr. & Gideon Rose, eds., *How Did This Happen?: Terrorism and the New War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001) — see especially the illuminating pieces by Jenkins, Doran, and Lieven. (Contrast this with the propagandistic nonsense peddled by Noam Chomsky in *9-11* [New York: Seven Stories, 2001], whose views are getting sillier and dopier with each new publication.) Finally, for an excellent introduction to the likely effectiveness and international impact of building various types of anti-ballistic missile defense systems, see James J. Wirtz & Jeffrey A. Larsen, eds., *Rockets' Red Glare: Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics* (Boulder: Westview, 2001).

Anyone who has not read a goodly portion of the above-named books cannot really be considered well-informed about the central international political issues associated with the tragic events of 11 September. Their opinions should therefore not be given any more credence than mine should if I suddenly began pontificating about quantum physics or microbiology. Contrary to the apparent belief of many self-styled "political punks," reading a handful of biased, one-sided articles and pamphlets does not make anyone an "expert," especially about such complex matters. And unless you actually have some degree of expertise about the subjects you're shooting your mouths off about, you shouldn't expect anyone else to take anything you say seriously — unless they're even more ignorant than you are.

## FOR THOSE ABOUT TO PUNK OUT, I SALUTE YOU

As I've said before in this column, now is a particularly satisfying time to be a record collector, since almost

## JEFFBALE

every week great obscure punk and 60's garage (surf, beat, punk, psych) reissues have been steadily appearing. Just this week I learned that two of the biggest remaining lacunae in the catalog of 60's reissues will soon be eliminated: Sundazed is about to reissue all of the CRYAN' SHAMES albums on CD (the first of which is absolutely mandatory), and some other label is apparently about to reissue the CLEAR LIGHT album on CD (hopefully with bonus tracks drawn from the film "The President's Analyst", in which CLEAR LIGHT appeared as drug-addled, free-lovin' hippies!). And, should any *Hit List* readers actually be interested — which I suspect is doubtful — even the GRATEFUL DEAD have finally been properly cataloged on the new Rhino 12-CD box set, which contains lots of early unreleased stuff in addition to remastered versions of their "official" albums, the first of which contains several truly fabulous tracks (like "Cold Rain and Snow" and "Cream Puff War"). Furthermore, Mark Brennan informs me that Captain Oi/Mod is now apparently working on getting the reissue rights for those killer neo-Mod albums by the JOLT and PURPLE HEARTS, as well as planning a long overdue CORTINAS reissue. That still leaves quite a few crucial gaps in the classical punk reissue catalog, most notably the LEYTON BUZZARDS album (which contained all of their singles tracks) and a CD version of the NIPPLE ERECTORS/NIPS, but most of these remaining voids are gradually being filled. (Alas, lots of killer late 70's and early 80's continental European punk bands have yet to appear in comprehensive CD collections, although the WIDOWS, TROTSKIDS, and RUDE KIDS have). I myself am still longing for remastered reissues of the first three ALICE COOPER albums (why they started the band's reissue series with "Billion Dollar Babies", a mediocre and much later album, remains a mystery to me). And the ongoing unavailability of nothing but shitty-sounding ROLLING STONES CDs (excepting the "Could You Walk on Water" double CD bootleg) is a calamity of the highest order. Even the BEATLES' albums should be remastered and reissued! After all, it's kind of strange that all the cool SEARCHERS albums have been exquisitely remastered and reissued, but we're still stuck with only fair-sounding "official" BEATLES albums.

Were we so inclined, then, we could fill every single page of *Hit List* with information about, and reviews of, classic rock'n'roll reissues ranging from the rockabilly era to the early 80's punk era. But given our self-proclaimed mission of also covering the best of trashy new underground r'n'r, the space we are able to devote to reissues is unfortunately limited. Hence I'll confine myself here to briefly discussing two of the best of the recent reissues — the debut album by LOVE and the band's third album and magnum opus, "Forever Changes", both of which have been remastered and reissued by Rhino, in cooperation with their original label, Elektra. LOVE was fronted by the temperamental but brilliantly creative musical genius Arthur Lee, who later descended into drug abuse, petty criminality, and what can only be described as partial madness, but before embarking on that tragic path he at least managed to bequeath a sterling repertoire of music



# HIT SQUAD

to the rest of us. He also gathered together other fine songwriters and musicians in LOVE, several of whom also happened to be really cool-looking (especially Bryan MacLean, who sadly became some sort of a Jesus freak prior to his recent death) in the manner that all of us teenage mop-tops aspired to be in the mid-60s. To put it simply, LOVE was just a supercool, bad ass band. And an amazingly original one as well.

The first LOVE LP should appeal to all aficionados of 60's garage music, since it features some blistering punk tunes (like "My Flash on You", which is every bit as good as "7 and 7 Is"), absolutely killer folk punk numbers (such as "Can't Explain", "No Matter What You Do", and "You I'll Be Following"), beautiful but painfully melancholy ballads (like "A Message to Pretty" and "Signed D.C."), psychedelic stylings (as in "Emotions" and "Mushroom Clouds"), and tough covers of "Hey Joe" and "My Little Red Book". This remastered reissue contains both the mono and studio versions of the album, plus two bonus tracks. If truth be told, this was one of my very favorite records from the 1966-1967 era, and even today I get nostalgia-induced goose bumps every time I listen to it because it invariably reminds me of my lost youth, beautiful 60's "gurls" I've loved and lost (or at least dreamed about), and the best that underground culture and music

has to offer. One look at the cover and you'll know that this is the real deal.

"Forever Changes" is a kettle of an altogether different sort of fish. If someone were to tell me, in advance, that I would end up loving a rock album that was filled with highly complex songs, heavy orchestration, brass, soft vocals, acoustic guitars, sensitivity, beauty, and introspective reflection, I'd assume that such a person was not only completely unfamiliar with my own musical taste but that he or she had no idea at all of what rock'n'roll was really all about. Yet although this superficially unflattering description applies perfectly to LOVE's third album, I positively love it to death. That's not to say that there aren't any mind-boggling rockers on it, as a careful listen to "A House is Not a Motel" will attest. It is, however, to acknowledge that much of "Forever Changes" is filled with the type of gentle-sounding "rock" music that I normally detest. Believe me, it's far more "emotional" than any dozen so-called "emo" records you could possibly name. In the final analysis, though, the songs are so astonishingly beautiful and evocative, the melodies are so insidious, and the lyrics are so dark and brooding underneath all of the superficial prettiness, that the record has justly come to be recognized as a bona fide classic. This reissue contains the original album, plus seven bonus tracks. Whether you want to call it rock'n'roll or not, "Forever Changes" is one of the greatest records ever made. You may have to listen to it several times before fully appreciating it, but I can assure you all that the time spent doing so will ultimately pay off — with a very high interest rate.

Next up: why most of today's rock'n'roll and punk rock inspires nothing but yawns. ☺

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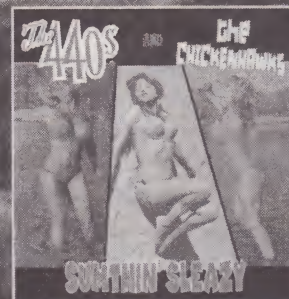
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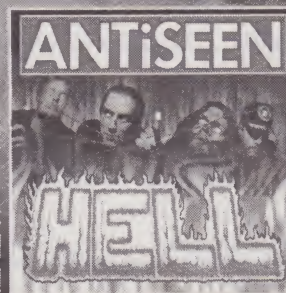


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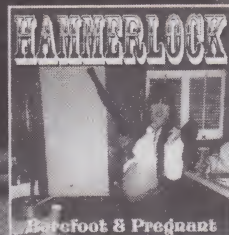


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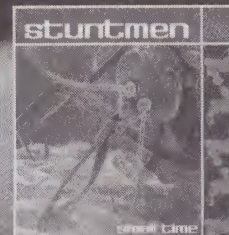
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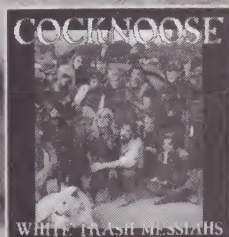
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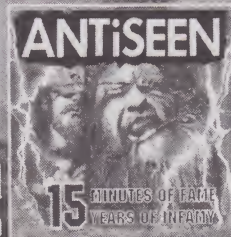
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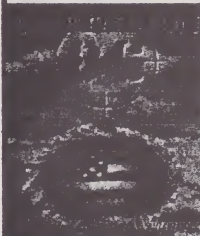
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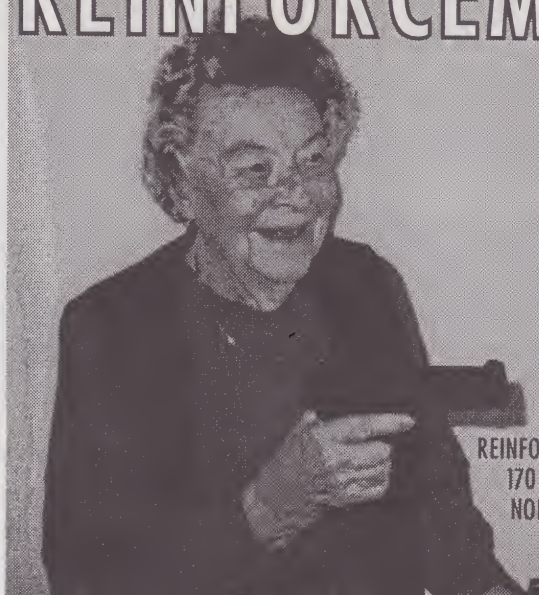
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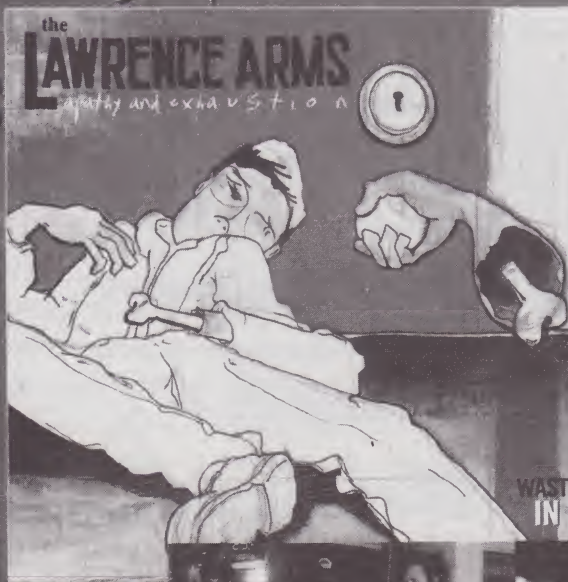


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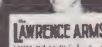
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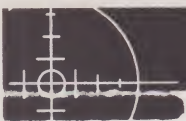


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*Depend upon it that if a man talks of his misfortunes, there is something in them that is not disagreeable to him.*

- Samuel Johnson

**A**nother friend of mine died yesterday. Actually, if you want to get technical, he died a couple weeks ago, and I just heard about it yesterday. And if you want to get even more technical, he didn't just die, he killed himself.

I used to wonder why these things didn't bother me more, wondered if there was something wrong with me, how I could have grown so jaded or insensitive that news of people's deaths had become just another, well, part of life.

I honestly don't know if my inability to grieve deeply over needless death is a weakness or a strength on my part. For a long time, I believed it was a defense mechanism. People were dropping dead so regularly and in such numbers that I simply couldn't afford to go to pieces every time it happened.

But that doesn't explain why, even when it happened for the first time, I felt curiously disengaged. It was back when I was 20 or 21, and this guy who'd taken me in when I was running from the cops, who'd basically saved my ass from prison, died of a heroin overdose.

He had been a part of our extended hippie family, and nearly everyone was in tears. "It's so sad," they wailed, and I just shrugged and said, "He was a fucking junkie, what did you expect?"

Of course they hadn't seen the side of him that I had. In Michigan, he'd taken acid with the rest of us, listened to the same trippy music, babbled about peace and love and magic. Back in New York, it was a different story.

In 1968 the Lower East Side was not the bohemian-cum-yuppie enclave it is today. Not by a long shot. We lived on East 11th Street, between Avenue B and C, and the previous summer there had been 13 murders in the immediate vicinity. On the sidewalk between our place and the corner of Avenue B, I could have shown you half a dozen major blood stains, one of them being mine, the result of getting the side of my head bashed in with a gun barrel.

Junkies did that to me, junkies did most of the shit that went on in the neighborhood, or so people said. But junkies came in all shapes and colors, and the ones I knew best were the three guys I lived with. They came from families far better off than mine, they'd gone to good colleges (and dropped out), they had sharp wits and a world of potential, none of which would ever be realized because within a year all three of them would be dead.

The first to go was my friend, the one who'd invited me to stay there. He OD'd in the back seat of a car on the way to a rock festival. The other guys dumped his body on the side of the Rhode Island Turnpike and kept going. For some reason,

I always thought that was funny. Or at least had a perverse sort of logic to it. I mean, the guy wasn't going to be any less dead if they missed the festival, was he?

In some circles, there's a certain mystique attached to heroin addiction, based, I imagine, on the fact that so many musicians and artists measured out their lives in needles and spoons. Nothing, however, dispels that mystique more quickly than living with some real-life junkies. For every Burroughs or Bird, there are hundreds or thousands who never do anything



more artistic than move in with you rent-free, steal your money, pawn your stereo, and then die on you in the most inconvenient and inelegant way possible.

Maybe I'm smart or maybe I'm selfish, but either way, I figured out early on that I didn't need any of that action. I had enough problems of my own without taking emotional responsibility for dysfunctional idiots who weren't satisfied with wrecking their own lives, but had to drag as many other people as possible down with them.

So I began a policy, which I've continued to this day, of distancing myself from those who seem determined to die. Okay, sure, we're all dying in our own ways and at our own pace, but if you're going to great trouble and expense to inject yourself with life-threatening chemicals several times a day, I'd say your determina-

tion to die far outweighs my ability or inclination to dissuade you.

There's a twisted sort of hierarchy in the drug world: the heroin addicts look down on the crackheads, the coke addicts look down on the heroin addicts, the potheads look down on everybody, and in my own drugging days, I was no exception. I consumed enough cocaine to keep a minor South American junta in brass buttons and Kalashnikovs, enough pot to stupefy — if that's not too redundant — an entire concert hall full of Deadheads.

But, I smugly and arrogantly assured myself, at least I wasn't one of those low-class junkies who used needles and

***Heroin addicts look down on the crackheads, the coke addicts look down on the heroin addicts, the potheads look down on everybody.***



# HIT SQUAD

nodded out on street corners. Plus I could stop anytime, though I never saw any particular reason why I should, at least not until my muddled consciousness began to be troubled by the realization that I was pushing 40, nearly broke, and so terrified of life that I would consume almost anything — as long as it wasn't heroin and didn't come in needles — that was able to at least momentarily distract me from it.

I'm not sure why I'm banging on about drugs, though. With one stupid exception, I haven't used them in many years. What's more, my friend who died wasn't a junkie. He barely even drank. It's true that he died from an overdose of pills, but that was only because it was the least painful means to an end he devoutly desired.

If he was addicted to anything, it was depression. That might seem like a strange concept; most of us tend to think of depression as an unfortunate condition that afflicts us, not something to which we cling as a coping strategy. But just as the hardcore speed freaks used to sneer at my drug habit, dismissing cocaine as "speed for wimps," I'm increasingly inclined to see depression as heroin for wimps.

I don't speak from abstraction here. Depression, even more than cocaine, marijuana, LSD or alcohol, was my drug of choice for much of my life. I know that viewpoint doesn't jibe with the prevailing outlook, that depression is an illness which we can only control through therapy and/or drugs. But as one former drug addict, put it, "Depression is not an ill-

ness. It means your life is fucked. Change it."

The first time I read that, I was ready to hunt down the woman who had written it and kill her. I already disliked her anyway: her writing style, her political views, her philosophy of life were all diametrically opposed to my own. And there was the added aggravation of realizing that she was right.

Depression probably kills more people than all the drugs combined, tobacco and alcohol included. Or, rather, people use it as an excuse for killing themselves. Whether they drink or drug themselves to death, absent-mindedly walk in front of a bus, overeat themselves into a heart attack, worry themselves into a brain tumor, it all adds up to death on the installment plan. In a way, you've got to respect someone who has the balls to end it all at once rather than drag it out for decades.

But the funniest thing about depression is that it appears to disproportionately afflict those with the easiest and most comfortable lives. Just as anorexia only seems to be a problem in cultures where there's an excess of food — ever wonder why you never hear of "eating disorders" in places like Afghanistan or Africa, where people are quite literally starving to death? — it's a strange paradox that the more privileged a society is, the more common suicide is likely to be.

Face it, much of the world is a hellhole. Hundreds of millions of people live on beetles and grubs and an occasional smattering of hope or religious fervor. Why on earth do they put up with it, struggling valiantly through an existence in which death has to look like the greatest relief, while innumerable middle class Americans and Europeans are ready to snuff out their own lives because they lack a sense of purpose

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or can't do a thing with their hair?

You think I'm being flippant? Hell, the second time I tried to kill myself — granted, I was high on about ten hits of acid at the time — was because I thought I was losing my hair (I was, but at such a slow pace that nobody else would notice it for another 25 years). The only reason I'm still here is that LSD increases rather than diminishes one's sensitivity to pain: if I'd been high on heroin or barbiturates instead, I wouldn't have had any trouble slicing through that damned artery.

My own suicide attempts were half-hearted or incompetent — an overdose of aspirin, for fuck's sake? — so I do sort of marvel at those who successfully pull it off. A few even manage to do a semi-artful job of it, like my friend who ran a hose from the exhaust pipe into his car and drifted off into permanent dreamland while listening to a tape loop of "Sgt. Pepper's" (dude, it was 1970, give the guy a break), or the psycho from my next to last street gang who volunteered for a second tour of duty in Vietnam ("Hey, I'm gonna kill people no matter where I am; I might as well get medals for it") and with an unerring sense of purpose stepped on a land mine his first day back.

Me, I never had the guts to take my own depression to its logical conclusion, just as I never had the guts to be a full-fledged junkie. It wasn't a case of conscience making cowards of us, as Shakespeare put it, it was just plain unadulterated cowardice. Or discretion being the better part of valor. Or choose your own cliché; the point being that somewhere along the line, I stopped wanting to die and started wanting to live, and ever since then, I've tended to lose interest in those who don't share my ambition.

I was at my parents' house when I got the news about my friend, and my mother was curious about why I didn't seem particularly shattered. "Have you known a lot of people who died young?" she asked innocently.

"Well, this makes 39..." I started to say, but then interrupted myself. "No, wait, it's 39 drug ODs, but that doesn't include the suicides and murders."

She looked, as she often does, as though she wished she hadn't asked, but something — I'm sure this runs in the family — made her plunge ahead. "Did you know very many people who died from AIDS?"

"No, I've been pretty lucky there. Only 10 or 20. Of course some of the ODs and suicides would have ended up dying from AIDS if they'd lived long enough..."

You can know someone your entire life and still be amazed at the things you find out about them. That's what she seemed to be thinking as she studied my face, momentarily at a loss for words. Putting myself in her place, I could see why: she's 83 years old, most of her relatives are gone now, she's lived through depression and war, through most of the

## LARRY LIVERMORE

20th century in fact, and it's got to seem terribly wrong to her that her son knows more people who've died than she does.

She's led a quieter life than I have, to put it mildly. I've done my best to visit on myself the old Chinese curse — "May you live in interesting times" — and I think I've been determined not just to dance with death, but to sit down after the dance and have a long, serious, drug and booze-addled chat with the geezer before deciding that maybe I didn't like him that much after all.

Bottom line: there are over six billion people in this world. It's getting pretty crowded. If you don't think there's much point in your taking up space, I'm not going to try and tell you differently. It's not because I don't value life that I feel that way, but because I do. Life is stubborn and tenacious and endlessly adaptable, but life well and meaningfully lived is the most fragile and delicate of things. Preserving it and cultivating it is a task akin to keeping a candle alight inside

a paper bag as you walk through a hurricane.

If you don't think it's worth that kind of effort, it probably isn't. There have been millions of geniuses who walked this earth before you, there will be millions more after you're gone, and the overwhelming majority of them lead, as Thoreau put it, lives of quiet desperation. A minority will be similarly desperate but quite loud about it, and the tiniest minority of all might do something that actually matters.

Yeah, yeah, I know, all life is special, every sperm is

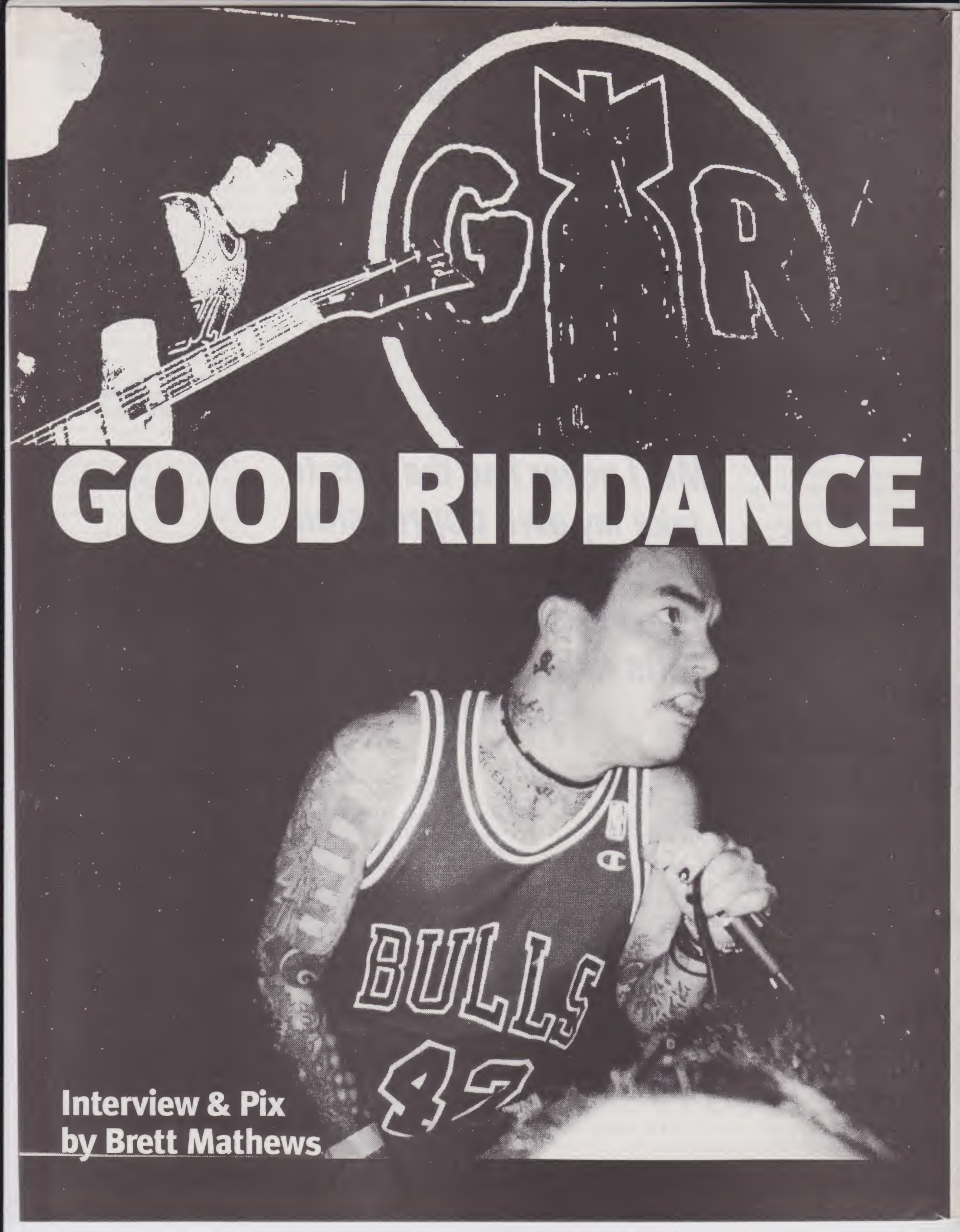
sacred, and who could get through the holiday season without "It's A Wonderful Life" reminding us that our seemingly mundane existences have infinitely far-reaching effects on the lives of everyone around us? Well, you know what? If your life isn't worth living, then don't flatter yourself by imagining that it's working any great wonders for those who could or would care about you.

Am I advocating mass suicide for the miserable? It's tempting, but no. I'm advocating that if you've decided to stick around, if you think it's worth putting up with 60 or 80 or 100 years of tedium and drudgery interspersed with bouts of pain and sheer terror for the sake of a few fleeting instants of ecstasy and transcendence, then by all means, do it and make it shine.

If you want to die, I won't disrespect you. I'll savor what was beautiful about your life and quietly mourn whatever tragic flaw it was that made you unable to carry on. If, on the other hand, you want to live, I'll hold you to a higher standard. This world needs courage, it needs strength and devotion, above all it needs brilliance and inspiration. If you can't show me that, I have to ask: is there some reason you're still hanging around? ☺

***Me, I never had the guts to take my own depression to its logical conclusion, just as I never had the guts to be a full-fledged junkie.***





# GOOD RIDDANCE

Interview & Pix  
by Brett Mathews



**Brett:** Maybe we should begin by talking about where you guys are at in your lives, and when did you first get into underground music?

**Luke:** I started out as metalhead in Junior High School. I started listening to a lot of IRON MAIDEN, MOTLEY CRÜE, and JUDAS PRIEST.

**Brett:** "Too Fast For Love", right?

**Luke:** "Too Fast For Love", for sure.

**Brett:** Is it the best rock record ever made?

**Luke:** Possibly.

**Brett:** Did you have long hair?

**Luke:** Sure, I had long hair up to the age of 19.

**Brett:** Did you drive an El Camino?

**Luke:** I never took it that far. I am aspiring to pick up a 70's Trans Am, though.

**Brett:** NICE!

**Luke:** It's been a goal of mine for some time.

**Brett:** A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do...

**Luke:** Yeah. Anyhow, by the time I got into my freshman year in High School (in San Francisco, '84-'85), I liked a lot of thrash metal – METALLICA was one of the forefathers of that whole scene. Bands like VIOLENCE, TESTAMENT, and so forth. So I started going to a lot of those shows in San Francisco at 15-16 years of age.

**Brett:** Did you own a guitar at that point?

**Luke:** Yeah, I've had a guitar since I was 14.

**Brett:** An Ibanez Metal Guitar?

**Luke:** No, it was more metal than that. It was a B.C. Rich Warlock.

**Brett:** Sweet!

**Luke:** I started going to all these shows in SF. Slowly but surely, you started seeing metalheads wearing t-shirts of punk bands! METALLICA members wearing MISFITS shirts. Guys in VIOLENCE wearing S.N.F.U. shirts. And I was like, "whoa, what's this all about?" So I started picking up some of these bands' records and was really excited about it. I liked it. About '85 you saw a crossover within the metal scene. There was a lot of punk bands on the same bills as metal bands. So you'd go to these shows and see a longhaired band, and then you would see...

**Brett:** D.R.I.

**Luke:** D.R.I. or something like that.

**Brett:** D.R.I. and Testament shows.

**Luke:** Yeah, and that happened a lot. The whole crossover scene was born out of that. By '87-'88, the thrash metal scene, everything kind of sounded the same. There was nothing that really inspired me about it at all. And at that time, I started getting into bands like BAD RELIGION, R.K.L., and a whole variety of bands that were on the punk rock side of things. So...

**Brett:** Does your guitar playing follow along the lines of what you were listening to? Were you ever in a metal band?

**Luke:** Yeah, I was in a metal band. The first band I was in was a metal band called RUDE AWAKENING. I played in that up to the age of 19, and this kind of gets into where I met Russ. At the time, he had GOOD RIDDANCE going on in Santa Cruz. I had a RUDE

AWAKENING, ya know? There was a small underground music scene going on in Santa Cruz. Russ and I became friends. We tried to put on a couple of shows by ourselves wherever we could, whether at the beach or the park or hooking up with people who would do a show at a hall or something like that. So we kind of developed a friendship and our two bands would play together. Metal bands playing with punk bands – it was a good idea. In Santa Cruz it was like one small community of underground music. I think it was New Years Eve of 1989 when the metal band I was in broke up. I had done some fill-in guitar stuff for GOOD RIDDANCE because one of their guitarists had broken his wrist. So I had a really good time playing with these guys, and was actually more interested in playing punk rock at that point in my life. So when RUDE AWAKENING broke up, I gave Russ a call and said "hey, I would really be stoked if you would be interested in having me in your band." He talked to the other guys, and they were all cool with it. And at that point, in 1990, I joined GOOD RIDDANCE as their second guitarist. I don't know how far you want me to go with this, so yeah, there have been twelve years of GOOD RIDDANCE. We went through a lot of stylistic changes and developed new identities, so we had interests in a lot of different areas. If you ever got ahold of some of the earlier demos, you'd probably trip out...

**Brett:** Yeah, I still want you to answer this question. The first 7" with songs like "Not So Bad", was very BAD RELIGION-influenced, whereas the version of "Last Believer" and other songs like "Just for the Day" were very East Bay. Ya know, very CRIMPSHRINE or OP IVY. Yet between that and the point where "Decoy" came out, there was such a dramatic change in sound. Were you just trying to find material you were comfortable with, or were there other factors involved?

**Russ:** We had different members then. The big thing about when you mention our East Bay-sounding stuff, the bass player we had who recorded the "Gidget"





box and a DEAD KENNEDYS' tape, and I heard "Chemical Warfare". That was the first punk song that I heard in its entirety. I had seen clips of on "Entertainment Tonight" with the Sex Pistols, but that was it. Anyway, I heard that song and thought, "what is this? This is great!" It was cool how irreverent it was – right in the middle of the song, they'd break into some sort of random thing that didn't follow any structural rules. It seemed to be all new up until then, so I was really into it. I went out and bought that record, then I bought J.F.A. and BUTTHOLE SURFERS records. That also went along with my skateboarding. I'd seen *Thrasher* magazine, which had its "Soundz" section.

**Brett:** J.F.A. was everywhere.

**Russ:** Yeah, J.F.A., the BUTTHOLE SURFERS, the TOY DOLLS. Early on I

## "I never thought about singing in the band until I heard the "Back to the Known" EP by BAD RELIGION..."

7" and the demo from which those songs came was named Devon. Basically Pete Rypins was his idol, and everything this kid played sounded like CRIMPSHINE. You mentioned that song "Just for a Day", it's pretty simple guitar-wise, but the bass line is what really makes the song in my opinion. Then we got a new bass player, Chuck. He was a totally cut and dried bass player – he wasn't filling our songs with all this crazy noodling, like Devon used to do. To me, that represented a big change in our music. It became a lot less East Bay-sounding, as you said – it was almost completely guitar- and vocal melody-driven, instead of having a lot of bass stuff going on, like when Devon was in the band.

**Brett:** Where did your punk come from?

**Russ:** During my freshman year of High School, I was into some New Wave, some

metal, and a hodge-podge of different stuff. I had a FLOCK OF SEAGULLS record, a SURF PUNKS record, and a LED ZEPPELIN record.

**Brett:** "My Beach"?

**Russ:** Yeah, I had "My Beach" and I had the SURF PUNKS' "Locals Only" record, too. I was listening to that stuff and whatever else was on the radio. I bought MEN WITHOUT HATS and "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" soundtrack, just weird shit, and I surfed everyday and smoked a ton of weed. I was playing in Senator High's Marching Band, snare drum, and there was a guy in our drum section named Jay. He was a punk rocker. There were maybe three in the whole school at that time, you know? He wore a big trench coat and had a shaved head. He was really a good drummer, and one day we were on a band trip, late on my sophomore year. He had a boom

started looking for bands in *Thrasher* and *MRR*, and then I'd go pick up records that got a good review. That is how I started building up my collection and started buying records all the time. 1983 is the year when I bought my first punk record.

**Brett:** It's funny that you mentioned the SEX PISTOLS. Do you want to talk about B.O.S.P.?

**Russ:** B.O.S.P.?

**Brett:** Spill it, or I'll tell a much uglier version of the story.

**Russ:** That was the band I sort of joined. I had friends that already knew how to play their instruments, and they had a band called BUNCH OF SKATE PUNKS. Then they changed it to UNION CARBIDE PLANT. That's when that



whole chemical leak took place in India at the Union Carbide Plant, something horrible happened and masses of people died. They were just monkeying around. The guitar player really liked AC/DC-type stuff and, even though I can appreciate it now, I never really liked AC/DC. I was really into punk. I never thought about singing in the band until I heard the "Back to the Known" EP by BAD RELIGION, when you actually heard melodies. I would hang out with these guys, I was friends with them all, and they asked me if I would sing for them. They were jamming there one night, and I just yelled into the microphone for half an hour. I thought it was pretty fun. They liked the way it sounded. I told them I would sing for them, but they had to stop playing these easy songs. And I started getting into the SEX PISTOLS, and our bass player was a punk already so he liked it. The drummer said "I don't know if I dig this, but I'll go along with it for now." The guitar player had to be completely deluged with punk in order to appreciate it, because he didn't really like it at first, but then he sort of got into it.

**Brett: Did you switch from playing guitar to just singing?**

**Russ:** I never played guitar, I was never actually in B.O.S.P. These three guys were in B.O.S.P. and then UNION CARBIDE, and then when I joined we changed the name. The two names that we came up with...well, the drummer thought up BOXED BEER and I came up with GOOD RIDDANCE, which everyone liked better.

**Brett- Thank God, huh?**

**Russ:** Yeah, but it had such a thin link to what GR is today. I was in it, and we did a lot of SEX PISTOLS covers. They were my favorite band at the time, you know? It was simple enough stuff to play. Our drummer really hadn't mastered playing fast yet and so we kind of just rocked out with these mid-tempo PISTOLS' songs. Steve Jones' guitar playing was SO simple, so blues based, so our guitar player learned how to play blues guitar in order to appreciate that style of guitar playing. We played parties, and out set

included all the Sex Pistols' songs we knew as well as a couple of other covers, like "House of the Rising Sun". Stupid shit like that.

**Brett: Did you guys ever play at the Derby skatepark?**

**Russ:** I never played at Derby, but other bands used to play Derby. I skated there all the time.

**Brett: It's kind of funny 'cause the first time I saw GR, it was in Reno (together with TILT on the first Fat tour). I came up to you afterwards and said "haven't I met you before?" And then I remembered that you were playing guitar in FURY 66 when I went down and saw NOFX in early '93. How did the whole FURY thing come about?**

**Russ:** FURY 66 was the byproduct of a couple of different bands breaking up. One band was called BACKWASH, whose bass player, guitar player, and drummer wanted to keep playing. Their singer kind of let up, and then this guy who was singing in a band called SCHLEP was going to be the singer. I was just learning how to play guitar, and by then I was writing songs and I wanted to be write songs that would emulate my guitar-playing idols – Mike Laffar from NOCK and Rick Agnew from the ADOLESCENTS and D.I. I wanted to write like those guys. We were all friends anyway, so we started jamming and practicing, and things just started to flow. The way things happen, when you get together with guys who have been in bands before, is that usually the process speeds up (as far as like finding an identity, getting songs down) since everybody kind of knows what to do. So we started playing, and called ourselves a bunch of different names for awhile. We could not decide on a name. Since the singer had a '66 Fury car, we decided to call ourselves FURY 66.

**Brett: Was Joe the singer all along?**

**Russ:** Yeah, Joe was always the singer. And during the time of this band's lifespan, we released a demo tape. Then

the drummer quit or was kicked out, I don't really remember, and GR drummer Rich filled in for the 7" and some shows. Then our bass player (Devon of GR) quit, and Tom, who was in FURY 66, played in GR. So for awhile we had this crazy thing going where the three of us were in both bands. FURY 66 started playing a lot around town, and that was basically how things came about. When GR got signed to Fat Records it was sort of decided that Rich and I would stay with them – 'cause by that time Tom had quit GR to join FURY 66 full-time and Chuck had joined the band full-time. We were the only people that were still in both bands at that time. FURY 66 wanted to go look for a label, wanted to tour and do the whole gig thing, and they thought that Rich and I would be unable to split our time equally between both bands and put all the effort that was needed into FURY. They were right, and we were sort of asked to leave. There was a lot of bullshit involved in that decision, but things would never have worked out. They went through several line-ups, but they kept playing. They put out two records, one on 1/2 Pint and the other on Sessions. They also toured a bunch and got out of Santa Cruz, which was rad, and they ended up making a lot of good music. They finally broke up a couple of years ago.

**Brett: There is a new record coming out that features old demo stuff. Did you play on any of that?**

**Russ:** No, I didn't play any of that stuff. Joe and I started a label called Lorelei Records that's going to be releasing the early demo and 7" on CD, since that material is much harder to find now.

**Brett: You're also going to releasing records by Joe's new band, right?**

**Russ:** Yeah, they're called AUDIO CRUSH. It's our first release, and should be out in September.

**[Chuck enters the room.]**

**Brett: Hey Chuck! You missed the first round, where we kind of talked about where you all were at when**



**you got into the alternative, underground hardcore scene. What were your first musical tastes like? What were you into before punk? How did you get pulled into the world of punk rock?**

**Chuck:** I started to listen to music in 5th grade. I had three older brothers who all listened to Metal. I listened to a lot of IRON MAIDEN, SCORPIONS, shit like that. I also met this guy Richard, who I'd known since 2nd grade, and he always tried to turn me on to different types of music. In 8th grade he had a JOAN JETT record and we would listen to it and I thought it was kind of cool, but she was a girl. I'd never heard of girls playing rock music. So I started liking it a lot and then later he – he was a year older than me, I was in 9th grade he was in 10th grade – let me hear G.B.H. I totally remember him. He went down to Zed Records in Long Beach and bought the G.B.H. "Give Me Fire" picture disc, which had the picture of them on it. He brought it over to my house and said "you got to check these guys out," and I said "no, no" because I really didn't like the way they looked or anything. I was like "alright, I'll put it on" and then went "whoa shit, this is insane!" It sounded good. The next day he took me to Zed Records and I bought the BATTALION OF SAINTS 7" because Big Frank told me to check it out. It was a 7" so I thought it was a 45, but when I put it on I thought "this can't be right." So I switched it to 33 and it was like (in a slow voice) "Second Coming" and I was fucking stoked. I flipped out, and after that I started buying a shit load of records. I had my brothers turn against me. They would come into my room, take records off my record player, and break them. They'd say "This shit sucks!" They were still into MAIDEN and they would just flip out, but I stuck with it!

**Brett:** They probably broke some records that are worth some money now, huh?

**Chuck:** Yeah, but I got them back. There was one record that my brother broke that I have never been able to find, which was ICONS OF FILTH. It's a white double record, but I don't

remember the name of it. I kept listening to music after that.

**Brett:** Were you playing bass by then?

**Chuck:** I was listening to music in the 10th grade. I moved to a different part of Long Beach, and there was this guy who skated who was into U2. I said "dude, you've got to check this stuff out." I totally pushed this on him, 'cause I knew he knew how to play a guitar and I really wanted to sing for a band. I let him hear SUICIDAL TENDENCIES, something he would recognize, something that he'd heard before. I put on the first SUICIDAL album and said, "Do you think you would be able to play guitar like this?" And he said "oh, yeah" and wrote some sketchy ass punk songs. He worked at a local dairy and knew a drummer was into metal, so he asked Brian, the drummer, to come over and play. I brought over all my RUDAMNTARY PENI 7"s and opened them up and sung PENI lyrics to all these songs they had. He had a little guitar cabinet that I would sing out of, and originally we tried to find a bass player but we could never find one. Mike finally said "You play bass." I was working a lot at the time at my parents shop and was living at home, and I saved up a bunch of money, so he said "go buy a bass and equipment and I'll teach you how to play the songs." He taught me how to play the songs. We played some shows with me singing PENI lyrics, but I really didn't want to sing anymore. We found a girl singer named Kim, because I was into 1034 a lot and she kind of looked like the girl from 1034. I wanted to make out with her. We played this party and she was singing the songs with the PENI lyrics, and then all the kids started saying "we want Chuck, we want Chuck!" And I went "oh, SHIT!" and she started crying at the show. It was her only show with us, so she just stopped singing and ran off stage. I was forced to get up and start singing, and everyone went crazy because they had seen the band with me singing.

**Brett:** You talked before about your arrival on Fat and how that kind of turned GR into a full-time, dedicated

**band. How did you hook up with Fat?**

**Russ:** Before Chuck joined, Tom Kennedy was the bass player who went to Art of Ears in Hayward with Andy Ernst and recorded what was pretty much the strongest recording. It sounded good. We were actually at the point where we had good songs that we hadn't done before, and I was booking us shows and we were playing where we could and just trying to get our name out there, 'cause it was still 1993-94. Punk was small and underground. It was not a big thing. You still had to do it yourself. So we went to record this tape and we sent it to everybody we could think of – MRR, labels that were looking for bands to sign, and even those that weren't looking. I would call a week or two later and say "Did you get our tape?" I was just doing the whole promotional thing. I'd been a fan of NOFX since I saw them play at Gilman Street years before. D.I. had cancelled and NOFX ended up headlining, but I had never heard anything about them. I went to a YOUTH OF TODAY matinee show, and Mike was out front selling copies of "Liberal Animation" for \$5 a pop.

**Brett:** Was it the black-covered one on Wassel?

**Russ:** Yeah, actually it was. I bought one 'cause I felt sorry for him; he looked tired and was carrying around this box of records. I wasn't really into that kind of music, but I liked "Ms. Jones" and "Beer Bong" was a funny song. Anyway, they played Gilman Street and I thought they were funny. What they said between songs was funny, and they were tight. They were a good band. So I started seeing them every time they played, and they just kept getting bigger and bigger. I was a fan, so when Fat Wreck Chords began I knew what it was. I knew that it was his label, and since I liked his band I thought I'd probably like the other bands he signed. I bought all the stuff that he put out, so it was another label to send our tape to. I basically sent a tape there and got a call ten days later. Mike said he liked our tape but didn't really know what to do with it right now. He couldn't put out any records then, but he asked me stay in touch. That was cool. Then a



couple of fortuitous things happened that could never happen today on Fat Wreck Chords. At the time he was still running the label out of his kitchen. Luke had a van and he hired himself out to take the WHITE TRASH DEBUTANTES on tour up to Vancouver. He was driving them to Vancouver, and NOFX was playing up there. He got to talking to Fat Mike and said "I'm in that band GR, you have our tape." And Mike told Luke right then and there that he wanted to sign us.

**Luke:** The WHITE TRASH DEBUTANTES played with the CADILLAC TRAMPS, who were friends with NOFX. NOFX had played at the NXNW festival up in Vancouver, so they were hanging out at the club visiting with the CADILLAC TRAMPS. A friend of mine had struck up a conversation with Mike and told him that I was there at the club and that I was in GR, and Mike said to go get me because he wanted to talk to me. So I just went up and started talking to Fat Mike, and he said "I'm ready to do something with your band, put a 7" out." It was like "SHIT, this is my dream come true." I called Russ the next day, really excited, and was pretty much in Seventh Heaven for a good month or so after that. Meanwhile, my house had burned down. The day that I called to tell everyone



**"I had three older brothers who all listened to Metal. I listened to a lot of IRON MAIDEN, SCORPIONS, shit like that."**

that we had gotten signed to Fat Wreck Chords, I learned that my house had burned down. But I didn't care.

**Russ:** Here's what ended up happening in the follow-up call to Fat Mike a month later. When we were still trying to set up the 7", I sold him on the idea of doing a full-length record. We had enough songs, and we thought that we could make a good record. He said "I'm into it, but first I want you to make a demo tape of all of them." So we did another demo, and he was so impressed with it that he got stoked on our idea of doing a whole album.

**Brett:** Was "Decoy" taken from the original demo you sent them or...?

**Russ:** We recorded songs for "Decoy" while we were in the studio during the same session that we used to record our new album. Between the time that he had received the tape from us and that point, we had written some new songs and that was kind of what the deal was. His plan was to put out a 7" and let us write some better songs. Then he got this demo, a lot of which ended up on "God and Country", and he was impressed. He thought we were ready to go directly into

a studio and record a full-length.

**Brett:** Were there any songs on "For God and Country" that were on the original demo?

**Russ:** Yeah, "October" was on there. "Two Year Circus", "Flies First Class", and "Boys and Girls".

**Brett:** Were they pretty similar to how they ended up sounding on the record?

**Russ:** We put a little more time into



them. Other than that, they're pretty similar. We also did "Little Man" for "For God and Country", but it never made it onto the record. I don't know where that is now.

**Brett:** With this sudden opportunity of putting out your record on a big label, it must have seemed like a great vehicle to reach the masses with ideas, if used properly.

**Russ:** I think it was. We were happy when Fat signed us because I was a fan of NOFX and I thought it was cool to be a part of it, but nobody could have predicted how things would blow up a year later. When we got on Fat, the first



**"There are too many preconceived notions about the Fat label, when in fact they've always given us complete freedom and unconditional support."**

STRUNG OUT had just come out, PROPAGANDHI was out, and LAG WAGON. Those bands just blew up in the next year. 1995 was the year that everything went nuts with Fat Wreck Chords, and if you were on that label you would suddenly go from playing your local town once a month to having everyone around the world know about your band. And the demand for it was just huge. We were really fortunate to get it when we did, which opened up so many doors for us. Like you said, since we were going to be heard by so many more people, we had to work a lot harder. We were willing to work, and I remember that after Mike had talked to Luke, things looked good. In bands you have to deal with so much rejection, especially coming from a small town like we did. I was like "OK, I'll believe it when I see it." And I kept on sending tapes to other labels and trying to book shows. At our lowest point, we certainly didn't say to ourselves, "yeah, we've really made it." We just kept going and going, and being on Fat just made it easier to do more, because now we could tour, now we could go places, and it was cool.

**Brett:** Did you, when Fat exploded in 1995, did you ever see the flipside to that? "We're a hardcore band and our fans like things underground, so maybe they won't buy it because it's on Fat instead of a cool underground label like Bridge 9 [plug, plug: this is the label that recently put out the BREATHE IN record) or Equal Vision or..."

**Russ:** We saw that a little later on. We're not a hardcore band. We can be called a hardcore band or a punk rock band, but we never thought "we're a hardcore band, so we can not be on Fat." Especially when "For God and Country" came out, lyrically it might be called hardcore, I guess. What happened when kids found out that our music had a deeper lyrical slant than songs about beer goggles and stuff like that, there were some questions about why we were on Fat. There are too many preconceived notions about the Fat label, when in fact they've always given us complete freedom and unconditional support. They do that with all their bands, which is what makes them cool. They don't follow a certain band format, they're able to do whatever they want to. They get bands off to a good start and

make sure they know what they're doing, then leave their bands to their own devices. You can see that in the bands' musical growth, or at least I can. Their initial stuff had a NOFX flavor to them, musically, but with each new release of STRUNG OUT, PROPAGANDHI, LAGWAGON, and even us, the bands increasingly fostered their own sound and their own identity, all due to the strong foundation that they started off on. But as far as the backlash is concerned, I think we got criticized later on, after we started establishing ourselves. This band has some social and political lyrics, and people were saying "how can you sing about this when this other band on your label doesn't care about that?" I think that's pretty ignorant.

Around 1997 we started playing more shows with SICK OF IT ALL and the East Coast HC bands, and that was another thing that raised the question. We were put in that type of scene, that kind of hardcore scene, where that question was brought up a lot because we did not fit the stereotype in a lot of ways. Kids were wondering why we were on Fat Wreck Chords. But there's a lot more to what Fat Wreck Chords is all about,



and I think there were lot of misconceptions and preconceived notions about what Fat is and what it stands for. I think all of us feel fortunate to be on this label. It's a very open-minded label, basically. We all play different genres of music.

**Brett:** Do you think that because bands like yourselves and PROPAGANDHI became more open to expanding into different sounds, that you also made it OK for Fat to expand their sound and sign bands like SCREW 32, SICK OF IT ALL, and AVAIL?

**Russ:** I don't know if that happened, but if it did I think that's cool. That is something you can throw back in someone's face if they say that all Fat bands sound the same – which I have heard a million times and which is simply not true. And what is cool about it is that Fat doesn't want to just sign a bunch of bands that all cling to each other, they want their bands to be different. They signed TILT, PROPAGANDHI, AVAIL, SICK OF IT ALL, SWINGIN' UTTERS, all kinds of different bands. I don't like to say we're hardcore. When I got into this kind of music, if you liked the DKs and OP IVY you were considered hardcore. That is the terminology that I grew up with, and it is all just changing. If you asked some HC kid today, if you played them "Slip it In" and asked if it was hardcore, they'd go "Fuck no! That's heavy metal." So what people say is hardcore has changed over time. But when you talk about hardcore, I think you mean bands like SICK OF IT ALL. The reason that I like playing with bands like that is because I felt closer to that kind of music than to bands who were playing the more melodic stuff that's now known as the SoCal sound. I don't know where that came from. I felt more akin to these types of bands; they were more like kindred spirits because I always liked a little bit of bite with my punk rock. I liked lyrics that dig a little bit deeper than just talking about partying or love or something stupid like that.

**Brett:** It's funny that you should bring that up. It may have

something to do with the fact that we all are a bit older than members of these new bands that are popping up, which means that we were listening to punk rock in the 1980's, when people had tons to bitch about. A lot of fucked-up things were going on, and the music was very passionate back then. People were talking about things they could be passionate about, and a lot of these bands nowadays don't seem to have that dimension.

**Russ:** A lot of questions that I am asked in interviews have to do with why I think punk has softened. Punk has obviously been softened in general, the music is sweeter and more sugary than when we started to get into it. I think there are two reasons for that. First, the commercial exploitation of punk as a culture, like when *Spin* published their cover on the year punk "broke." I mean, punk had been going on for 15 years under their noses, and they never bothered to mention it before. The moment they did it became open season, and so lots of punk bands began to want to get friendly with the mainstream music press. The music press sought to promote bands they'd previously ignored and, in order to market them for mass consumption, excised a lot of their caustic wit, cynicism, and bite because the average Joe just doesn't want to hear about that. Second, it's like you said, the times were different. When I got into punk, Reagan was President. I went to bed every night not sure that there was not going to be a nuclear war. It was a pretty dark shadow to live under, and Reagan was an easy target. Punk songs seemed made to order when Reagan was around. Although there are lots of problems all over the world today, this sense of impending doom isn't present. At least, I do not feel like it is. [Note: This interview was completed prior to 9/11.] Kids today are not growing up in the same context or the same scene that I did. The world is a lot smaller due to the internet and other technologies. People feel a lot more connected to each other than they used to. It's not so much this "us against them" mentality. The two big superpowers were engaged in a Cold War, which is real fertile ground for lots of stuff, including fear, and a lot of that was reflected in the punk songs of the times.

For example, are we going to blow ourselves up for nothing? I think that kids today aren't faced with these same kinds of realities, at least not on that level. It was also a time when the unemployment rate was real high and the country was not doing so well unless you were rich. And today, even though there is still a huge "class" problem, it's not as stark as it seemed in the early- to mid-80's.

**Brett:** You actually made some Reagan references on your first album, "For God And Country", which might have been one of the final chapters in a book of songs inspired by that period.

**Russ:** Well NOFX had a Reagan song on their "Fuck The Kids" 7". That was funny. I guess I'm kind of dating myself, writing about Reagan, Vietnam, and such.

**Brett:** So what's going on around you right now that moves you so passionately? What has you wanting to scream about it in a song and open other peoples' eyes to it?

**Russ:** A lot of where this comes from is that GOOD RIDDANCE has enabled all of us to travel a lot to other cities, states, and countries, which has really opened up my eyes to a lot of things that are going on in the world. There's a big difference between the self-image of America and how we are viewed elsewhere in the world. It's so easy to grow up in America and never leave and be immersed in this real narcissistic identity that we have about how we are great and how we are number one, because that's what we are bombarded with from the time we are little. All the media really condition us to view ourselves in a certain way on an international level, but when you go over to Europe, you find out what people really think of us over there, and why they feel that way, and it gives you some reason to think, "well, maybe we're not so ideal, and maybe there is some room for improvement." It seems to others that Americans are driven solely by profit and self-interest, and that we're never forced to look beyond our own borders. If you



live in Western Europe, the countries are so small and so bumped up against each other that you really need to incorporate a broader sense of the world around you. Otherwise there would be so much more war and bloodshed over there than there already is. It gave me a real sense of trying to be more conscious of what's going on around me, in countries close by, and being able to relate to people who might speak a different language or have different beliefs rather than treating them with fear or distrust. We can't even avoid fearing people who arrived in North America before we did. There are lots of Californians who want to kick all the Mexicans out, yet most of them live in towns with Spanish names. I never quite got that one. Going to places like Europe and even Canada showed me that we could learn things from other people, not only as individuals, but as a nation. That's just not in the American mindset. Our attitude is that if we think of something, it's bound to be right, and everyone else should follow our lead, but if they do something that makes sense, we're not interested at all. For God's sake, we're the only major industrial country that doesn't have a socialized health care program, and that's just the start of it. Look at those Canadian and Western European countries I was talking about. Most Americans, if polled, would love to have a health care system like that, but it will never happen as long as the existing corporate elite remains in power. I think we should legalize drugs. I think we are wasting billions and billions of dollars and a lot of time with our "War on Drugs". It's ridiculous. And it's something that I never would have thought about had I not been able to go over and look at the alternatives first hand.

**Brett:** I might be way off here, but your records have been getting way more aggressive and way more political as each new one comes out. You seem to be fighting against more, for more, and with more each time. Is this something that has resulted from your world travels and exposure to different views?

**Russ:** I feel that we have always maintained the same level of politics in our records, but a lot of people feel the

way that you do. Some people focus on all the love songs. Some people say "well, 'Operation Phoenix' was great, but the rest sucked." Different people view things in very different ways. GOOD RIDDANCE certainly never had a mission statement, and we certainly never wanted to be a political band. I write all of the lyrics, and I am interested in politics. I bring the songs to the band, and they say "yea" or "nay" or whatever, and that's how we create songs. I think it would be inaccurate to call us a political band, just like it would be inaccurate to call us any single type of band. If people can gain some sort of empowerment, information, or a spark of curiosity from our lyrics, be they political or social, then that's great. If you just want to be entertained and dance, that's great too. We don't have a mission to fight something, though. Any time you have bold lyrics, it's going to paint your band in one color, which is unfortunate, especially in our case, as I feel it misrepresents us. I think everybody in the band is quite concerned with the world, and we want to live right and certainly don't want to harm other people, but I think to get specific about it and say we're a political band is inaccurate; that's not our band. I think that if we did do that, it would limit us in so many other ways, and it would be a huge step backwards.

**Brett:** Well, let's touch on a point that you made somewhere in the middle of that statement. When you see kids in your audience singing along to your songs, do you hope that they *get* the lyrics, or is it OK if they consider the vocals to be just another instrument in the band? Do you hope that at some point they start thinking about what they are singing along to?

**Russ:** I do, sure. I take a lot of time with the lyrics I write, and they mean a lot to me. There are so many bands out there who sing about so many different things. There is no reason why kids should pay attention to what I'm saying more than what anybody else says, but I certainly hope that they do. The reason I started wanting to write songs is that all the bands that I listened to made me start to think. They would make me question the

way that I looked at something, and made me start to think that maybe I could make a difference, and that it wasn't all a lost cause. That's why I want to be in a band. This is why I do this. Some people want to be in bands because they love the music. Some people want to get out and travel. People do bands for lots of different reasons, but for me strong lyrics that have something to say have always kept me buying records and getting into my favorite bands, and therefore it should be no surprise that that's what's so important to me in GOOD RIDDANCE. If a kid can leave our show with his life improved at all by what our lyrics say, as well as by having had a great time at the show, then I am happy about that. It's not up to me what each kid takes away from a GR show, though. If I stood at the door and monitored the kids who were coming in and made sure that they were all intellectually aware or had an open mind, then I would get in trouble. I can't do that. I think it's important for kids to be themselves.

**Luke:** And then you'd also cross that boundary and turn into a "preachy" band, and none of us want to be preachy type of people. Like Russ was saying, I think it's a great forum for him to express thoughts and ideas that he believes in. You put them out there, and kids read them. Either you spark their interest or you don't. Hopefully you do, and it might even be in a different way than Russ intended, but at least it's gotten the kid thinking. I think that there's a real lack of music these days, especially in the underground scene, that gets people to think. Growing up in the 1980's, there was a lot of that element in the music.

**Russ:** It's cool to see all these younger kids be able to get into the scene and get these bands started nowadays. I wish I could have done that when I was a teen. But they are all raised on a different brand of punk rock that is really, really light-hearted. It's still fun and still punk rock, but it's really, really light-hearted, with not too much for me to sink my teeth into politically. That's what I always wanted, and that's what I always longed for. That's why I loved the DEAD KENNEDYS. They told it like it was, and they weren't afraid of doing so. They were singing about things that were



really important to them. What I don't understand about a lot of these younger bands is that the lyrical content doesn't seem to matter as much anymore to them, and maybe it doesn't. I guess times are changing. Most of the bands I listen to at home all broke up ten or fifteen years ago, and now there is very little out there that does it for me. Most of the bands out there that do it for me today would be termed "hardcore bands."

What's funny is that one of the most popular bands in our scene, and certainly in our state, is so often overlooked for their lyrical content, and that's PENNYWISE. I was looking through the lyrics on their new record, and I thought that they were really good lyrics, and also political. So many kids that I know who listen to PENNYWISE could give a

rat's ass about their lyrical content because they are such a musical band, and maybe there are a lot of kids out there who could give a rat's ass about what I have to say. I guess that's how it is. I think a lot of the lyrical content is there nowadays, it's just that kids never bother to read the lyrics. When I was getting into punk, I would buy a record and go home and read along with every song. I really wanted to know what they were saying, and I just don't know if people think that that's so important anymore, or at least as important as it used to be.

**Brett:** I can't tell if you're leading perfectly into my next question, or if you just answered it, but I thought it

was brilliant when I read somewhere that you said, "go buy the record and read it". Is the music as important as the message to you, or is the music merely a vehicle to get the message to people in the audience, and then have it crammed in their faces with a sense of urgency because of the aggressive nature of the music itself?

**Russ:** That's a question which every member of this band would probably answer differently. For me, it started out with the music just being a medium for communication, and just a vehicle to transport what I wanted to say. But I've since learned a lot about songwriting and song structures, as we all have, and now there's much more to it. I think the song has to have lyrics that neither I nor

**"When I was getting into punk, I would buy a record and go home and read along with every song."**



anyone else have used before and that have to be thought-provoking. It's got to be something you can read, but it also has to be a good song. It has to sound good. The band has always thought that way, but until recently they would write the songs and I would be like, "OK, I have to fit some words in here somehow." So that has changed for me. Lyrics are still the most important thing to me, but we all want to have the best-sounding song possible.

**Brett (to Luke):** Did you want to add anything to that...?

**Luke:** ...Being a different guy in the band than the lyric writer?

**Brett:** Yeah, that's the description I was looking for.

**Luke:** Well, obviously Russ wants to convey the message of his lyrics, because it's from his heart directly. As a musician in the band who is kind of in the background and such, I have to find a way with my instrument to make a



connection to the overall picture that the song is painting. A lot of times I'll have Russ sit down with me with his lyrics and explain exactly what he is trying to convey, and with what overtones, and then I'll try to create that feeling. At that point it's no longer just guitar playing, it's creating the feel of the song. If a song needs to be strong, or angry, or whatever, I try to transpose that type of energy to my guitar playing, and that's the way that I communicate in the band. When it comes down to what Russ is saying, I'm 90% in agreement with what he is saying, but as individuals we all see things a little bit differently here and there. All in all, though, we all come from the same places and have very similar ideals, which I think is a big part of the strength behind our band. It's taken us a

**such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Santa Cruz AIDS Foundation, and you have a lot of animal rights literature up on your merch table.**

**Russ:** It's not my goal to affiliate us with any organization. My thought is, while we're selling all these records, and that's going great, and we're talking a lot of shit about how this all needs to get better and whatnot, what else can we do besides write about it in songs? There are tons of things that bands can do. One of the things we came up with is that we shave a percentage off of our royalties from each record sold and donate it to these organizations who are barely getting by in this day and age of low to nonexistent social funding. We can

for different organizations with every record. It's also cool in that it helps these organizations in two ways. Obviously it helps them acquire much needed money and funds, but also the act of putting their name in our record sleeves with information might encourage kids to get in touch with them and help out, or just get out more information about what they're all about. As far as the PETA literature, we're not affiliated with them, and they don't need our money, but I think that their stuff is so well put together and easy to digest that maybe some kids will just put it in their pockets while they're at our merch table, then pull it out at home and read it. We've had really great feedback from that. We've had a lot of kids write to us and say that such information changed their lives.

**"All in all, though, we all come from the same places and have very similar ideals, which I think is a big part of the strength behind our band."**

number of years for everybody in the band to figure out their role, and to really feel comfortable with it. It's also hard to deal with people who try to tell us just what role our band plays in the genre. We keep hearing "Oh, you're a political HC band." Or "you're a melodic pop punk band," or whatever. But it's not that simple.

**Brett:** You guys hit a heavy as hell breakdown in one of your songs, and scream "meat is murder." That's the first time I'd heard that in about a decade. It's not my lifestyle choice, but it's kinda cool to see it thrown out there so emphatically.

**Luke:** And I think it would be wrong for us to do that type of a song if we weren't all on the same page with our beliefs. There are things like that that serve as really strong ties within our band, and it allows us to have songs like that that are pretty bold and upfront.

**Brett:** It seems like there are a lot of organizations that you guys back,

volunteer our support. That's kind of how it all started, and at that point it opened up, like a can of worms, all of the things that a band can do. But then it also sometimes comes back, and you think that you're not doing enough, or asking yourself about what you can do to help other organizations. Overall it's great, though. I remember on our second record we were going to donate five cents per record sold to Food Not Bombs. We took it to Mike at Fat to approve it, and he not only backed it but said that Fat would match that amount. That was really cool, so we have done something like that





They never knew some of the things that were going on because we live in a culture where you are not told all of the facts and where someone else is determining what would be best for the American public to be informed about. PETA is really accessible for people, and is also easily available through the web. They have always shipped us stuff on the road, and our relationship with them has been a great one.

**Luke:** I just think it's great to keep people aware of these types of social organizations. I think there has been a lack of that in the music scene over the last decade or so. Putting a name like that in our album will just make a kid think – why did they do that, and what are they all about? – and force them to look into what some of these organizations are all about. At that point they might have more questions, or maybe they can get hooked up with other people that they might be able to work with. It's just about getting the thought process going and opening minds. It's just another aspect to the band.

**Russ:** It's cool that this is an environment that these kids feel so comfortable in, with the music and the shows, and it seems like a great opportunity to try to get kids to think a little bit deeper instead of just trying to get them to dance around. I think that a lot of other kids are as impressionable in their teen years as I was, and that they're pressured one way or another by what other people say is cool. If a kid thinks that we're cool, and he sees us backing the Santa Cruz AIDS foundation, maybe he's less likely to become a homophobic young adult. That's how I had a lot of my preconceived notions, created through media and propaganda, about different aspects of life smashed – it was thanks to thought-provoking lyrics from bands that I listened to as a kid. There is nothing wrong with educating yourself. If you go and read all of this literature on veganism and still want to eat meat, at least you've made an informed decision for yourself. That's what it's all about. We are all brought up being lied to, and are then expected to make decisions based on half-truths.

**Brett:** I think it's great that you can

**sit back and see the position that you are in, and the vehicle that you've been given by virtue of having a popular band, and then be able to do as much as possible with it. You're not cramming it down other people's throats, like so many other "political" bands, but you are making ideas available if certain people have questions about it. Most bands don't take advantage of the golden opportunities that they have.**

**Russ:** But it seems like no matter what, it's never enough for some people. We just have to do what keeps us happy with ourselves.

**Brett:** Allow me to preface this remark with a reminder that I am your age. Do you guys find it difficult to keep pushing these youthful ideas and ideals of "punk" as you get older? I know a lot of people lose faith about "idealistic music" when the messengers take a right turn on hypocrisy street, such as, say, Mike Judge from Judge. But in spite of these developments, you seem to be getting more aggressive than ever with your message.

**Russ:** It's unfortunate, and straight edge gets a lot of shit for that sort of thing, but you could fill stadium after stadium of people who had said one thing and then completely changed their ideas when they hit a certain age or place in their life. Most of the people who talked the loudest are the ones that fell the hardest. I think we all agree that it gets a little bit tougher as you get older. What I think is really cool, as I watch my friends get older around me, is that people don't necessarily get out of punk. They just can't keep going to shows every night and going crazy every night. It doesn't make them "not punk." It's cool to see a couple of parents walking down the street, both with full sleeves, and notice that their baby carriage is covered with punk stickers. That's rad, and it's just as punk as the kid in the front row singing along with every word. For me, like you were saying, we realize that we have this voice, and this vehicle to get a message out there and try to enrich peoples lives in some way, and to try and create something positive where it wouldn't have existed before. As long as we can do

that, I'm down to keep doing it. I'm into punk. I love punk. It's sad that I feel I have to listen to punk from a decade or so ago to get my fix, but I still love the music. I love the color of it, the speed, the feel, and the aggression of it. I'm sure people around me look at my age and assume I was going to have grown out of this by now, but I don't think I ever will.

**Luke:** You also have a lot of changes with responsibility as you get older. There's a huge difference in being 18 without a care, and getting your friends to go to shows every night, and being 30 and trying to catch some time with your wife and two kids after a 14-hour shift at work. I don't think music becomes less important, but I think some things might bump it down somewhat on the priority list.

**Brett:** What were some of the reasons why you switched from Ryan Greene, who recorded and produced your first few albums, to Bill and Stephen at the Blasting Room?

**Russ:** Our music had always been tempered with the old raw aggressive sounds of bands like BLACK FLAG, and even though we love Ryan and loved working with him, it just seemed like we needed to experiment with other sounds. I think Ryan is amazing with what he does, but his sound is more appropriate for '80's heavy metal than for punk music. It's real shiny and polished. That may work for band "A", but does GOOD RIDDANCE really fit into that sound? Does this approach fit us? I just didn't think it was suiting our music. I started thinking about what might happen if we went to a studio that mostly did aggressive music. The Blasting Room came up, and we were all into the DESCENDENTS and the stuff that they had done. I was the most reluctant to go there, because I thought it was still a real "poppy" environment, but then we started listening to things they did like the WRETCH LIKE ME record, which was sonically big but still had a real raw edge to it. When I listened to it I could envision them playing live, and I loved that about the recording. I wasn't completely sold on the idea, but when we first started talking to Bill, he was so



excited about it, and so into the band and our sound, that he ended up coming to our practices. He had great ideas for songs. Like I said, you never really know about something different until you try it out. The Blasting Room really sold us on their operation.

**Luke:** They really spoke our musical language. It was really easy to communicate our ideas and explain to them what we were going for with our songs. We could reference people, guitar tones, and feels from certain albums and eras, and they were totally there with us.

**Brett:** Probably because they were in half the bands you were referencing!

**Luke:** (laughs) That too!

**Chuck:** It was even to the point where if we explained to them that this part is supposed to sound like a crappy band that's totally falling apart and just barely holding it together, they would totally know what we were talking about. Ryan Greene wouldn't go for that.

**Russ:** We just wanted a record that would sound as good sonically as all of today's records and yet still have the same urgency of all the bands that got us into wanting to make music in the first place. They were able to do this. Ryan would just focus on all of the recording flaws that gave those early recordings their character.

**Luke:** And those guys will also just tell you that you suck if you do. That's beautiful. When Bill Stevenson walks up and tells you something that you just did sucks, it makes you want to do it better.

**Brett:** On your new record two things struck me. Firstly, it seems as though your records have always staggered back and forth between pissed off political songs and poppy love songs, and yet this record seems to walk right down the middle and never seems to stagger too far in either direction. Secondly, "Phoenix..." was such a powerhouse and so aggressive, and the follow up CD EP was equally aggressive and almost regressed musically to a more

**simple chord progression a la early punk and HC. This CD seems to have a much different sound. In both these cases, was this something you were shooting for or did things just sort of turn out that way?**

**Russ:** It's weird. Like you said before, in your opinion we've gotten more political with each record, and yet a lot of people ask us why we don't make all of the same bold political statements we used to. We get so many conflicting reports on these things that it's just funny to see how people view these things so differently. God, the EP. I don't think I have ever seen so many conflicting reports on one piece of work before. It was a weird release for us, with our drummer situation and all. We wanted to have something new out for the Warped Tour for our fans, but we didn't have a full-time drummer at that point. That's why we did the EP, and for what it was I think it's really good. It by no means encompassed the situation under which I want to write music, nor do I believe it's our best work. As far as the other records are concerned, I shudder when I hear the word pop applied to our music. If that's what you or other people want to call the more melodic stuff, that's all subjective. It's funny that you mentioned that the new record is more down the middle and not too far to either extreme. That was actually a conscious decision. One thing I've done in the past with our recordings is either go for the absolute spitting-up-blood screaming on the aggressive songs or the singing extra pretty and doubling up vocals on the more melodic songs. I didn't know any better. In hindsight, the music is all GOOD RIDDANCE, but it almost sounds like there are two different singers. It was something Stephen pointed out when we were doing our next record. He likened it to the DESCENDENTS, where they had weird metal songs like the "Iceman" and pretty songs like "Clean Sheets", yet everything was tied in together by a common vocal sound. It was all totally Milo. We decided to find out what "Russ" sounded like, and do total Russ on every song. Don't oversell the aggressive stuff, and don't undersell the melodic stuff. It was something I would never have thought about, but it makes so much sense. He was totally on my ass the whole time that I was doing vocals so as to keep it

right where it should be. I was really stoked to hear some of our more melodic songs with some grit on the vocals, and some melodic overtones to our more aggressive music. I think that's where that "even" feeling you were talking about comes from. It's amazing that you picked up on that.

**Brett:** Is this your favorite release to date?

**Russ:** Yes.

**Brett:** By far?

**Russ:** I love "Phoenix..." just because it's so pissed off, but I don't ever want to be where I was when I wrote those lyrics again. I'm really glad it's there, and people will either like it or they won't. When it came out, people were going, "what the fuck is this?" Including some people at our label! But I'm still really proud of it.

**Luke:** It's not real representative of the band's sound, but it's real representative of where we were at that point.

**Brett:** As a person I'm sorry that you were there, but as a fan I'm glad we got the end result. That is by far my favorite record that you have done.

**Russ:** Yeah, sometimes you have to suffer in order to get the end result, but I don't regret it at all. It's a great record. The EP was the first record in which I didn't feel like I was the worst singer in the world, and where I actually had fun doing vocals. That kind of carried over into the new record. A lot of people tell me that I'm singing more on this new record, but I just don't think that's true. I just think that I'm singing more confidently. For the first time my voice was my friend instead of my enemy. It gave me a lot more freedom.

**Luke:** We also added a new drummer, who gave us a new dynamic on that record.

**Brett:** I was going to ask you about that. I remember a few years ago



when you were all so stoked to take a new band called LIFETIME with you over to Europe. Out of its ashes came the almighty KID DYNAMITE, and now you have their drummer!

**Luke:** Actually, Dave wasn't in LIFETIME when we took them out; I think he was in the earlier incarnation. But I remember that when we toured with K.D., I would watch him play drums with my jaw on the floor. I always thought that if there was another punk drummer I would want to play with, that's the guy right there. I remember that when we needed a new drummer, we all brought up Dave. He initially turned us down because he didn't know what he wanted to do.

**Russ:** Dave from LAGWAGON was never a permanent drummer for us. Shawn quit before KID DYNAMITE broke up, and we had some things we had to do still looming in the future. We knew the

**Luke:** Honestly?

**Russ:** Let 'er rip!

**Luke:** I think it sucks.

**Brett: Is this part of the fermentation that was the fuel behind "Phoenix..."?**

**Luke:** It was part of it, but it's all worked out. It went down like this. From the early years of GOOD RIDDANCE, I would write the music, bring it to practice, and then Russ would put lyrics to it and that would end up being our song. That's how the majority of "For God And Country" was written. At the same time, Russ was getting really good at guitar and had discovered, at least from what he said, that it was easier for him to write lyrics to his own chord progressions. I can understand that. I

perfectly straight line.

**Luke:** We are all more comfortable with how a GOOD RIDDANCE record is written now, and I am more familiar with song structures that he feels comfortable singing to. Now I just focus on writing my three or four songs per record that I think Russ can compliment with his vocals, and I'm pretty comfortable with that now.

**Russ:** The songs keep getting better in the band as well. I think we used to write a lot of riffs and then string them together as a song, whereas now we sit down and write more complete songs. I'm happy with where we have ended up, and it's the culmination of all four people's efforts, not just one or two.

**Brett: Does the fear of writer's block or insecurities weigh doubly heavy on you now that you have to write**

**"It would be unfair at this point to show up at practice and say that Luke needs to start writing more songs because I can't. It's all good. I think these pressures make me write better songs."**

other Dave from when he was in R.K.L., and knew he didn't live too far away and was a great drummer. LAGWAGON had just decided to take a year or so off, so it worked out well and he was able to help us out with Europe, the Fat tour, the Warped Tour, etc... It worked out, but he was always kind of a weird fit for us. It's funny because LAGWAGON Dave would listen to KID DYNAMITE Dave, and mention how great he would be for us. He even put his arm around him in Jersey and tried to talk him into joining the band.

**Brett: So with Russ writing the majority of the songs, both lyrically and musically, how does that sit with you (Luke)? How is it to be a guitarist and have the riffs that you will play brought to you?**

**Russ:** (laughs, I'm sure knowing what's coming)

think if you are a songwriter, you start getting musical ideas from your lyrics. It's a natural progression. By the time the second record came around Russ was really starting to write a lot of the music, and with each moment after that my contributions to the songwriting process became less and less, down to three or four songs on the album. It's been a hard adaptation because I feel I have a lot of creativity in my guitar playing, so what I've had to do to satisfy my own creative hunger is take the songs that Russ brings in, most of which are in pretty rough forms with basic chord structures and maybe ideas for breaks here and there, and build on them and personalize them. It's weird. As much as it used to bother me, I've really enjoyed what Russ brings to me. I think he writes great songs and has good melodies, and in the end I would actually have to list Russ as one of my guitar influences.

**Russ:** Yeah, I'm the smeared ink on his

**both the lyrics and the music?**

**Russ:** Yeah, but it's nobody's fault but my own. It would be unfair at this point to show up at practice and say that Luke needs to start writing more songs because I can't. It's all good. I think these pressures make me write better songs. We demand a lot of ourselves, as does our label. I have had writer's block before, almost to the point of suicide. I don't leave the house or talk to anybody for days, and I've done some really fuckin' weird things that I don't want to talk about. It's a nightmare. I always try to force myself to play guitar for no less than 3-4 hours a day in order to come up with stuff, and I always have a lyric book with me to write things and ideas down. I'd say that 90% of the lyrics for the new record were written on airplane rides. I just keep the book with me and write stuff down. I try to avoid writer's block at all costs.



**Brett:** I'm as bummed as you were with the apparent robbery that took place in this last election. But weren't you at least stoked knowing that Bush was going to be supplying you with a ton of lyrical content?

**Russ:** That's a hell of a high price to pay for some lyrical inspiration! (laughs). As far as I know, we all voted for the Green Party. It was Chuck's first time voting! It's pretty sad voting in this country. It's pretty sad knowing all along that I'm going to vote for the Green Party, and then watch the country and the media control what we see and know. Even so, to have to watch the whole post-election thing be drawn out and be played out in the media was interesting. I watch Fox News every morning, mostly for its comedy value, and I think it's interesting that their motto is "Fox News: Fair and Balanced." When the two main parties held their conventions, Fox News created a whole new graphics scheme and theme music and sent their best reporters there to cover the whole thing. Yet there was never a single mention of the conventions for the Libertarian Party, or the Green Party, or the Peace and Freedom Party. How is that fair and balanced? I did see

restaurant is the only restaurant in town, it can sell the shittiest food and still do business. Having the media cram these two parties down our throats as the only options was ridiculous. Even if the other parties had no chance, they still had topics and ideas that should be brought up and shown to the American public.

**Brett:** I see the logic in this, but I'd like to hear your answer. You are straight edge, and yet very much in favor of the legalization of drugs. Why is that?

**Russ:** I have seen enough different situations and scenarios in the world to know that what we are doing in the War On Drugs isn't working. The fact that I don't do drugs and find them not to be beneficial to anybody has nothing to do with it. The amount of time and money that we

programs in which we can actually help people and inform people, not try to scare them or treat them like violent criminals simply because they smoke a different plant than other Americans do. Let's look at countries that don't have our problems and see what they are doing. Unfortunately, America will never step down from its pedestal and examine its own image long enough to learn from anybody else.

**Brett:** That would make too much



**"I have seen enough different situations and scenarios in the world to know that what we are doing in the War On Drugs isn't working."**

a little bit of the Green Party convention on C-Span at around 3 in the morning. The camera was set up on a tripod in the center of a half-empty banquet room. It's sad, especially since it's getting harder and harder to tell the Democrats and Republicans apart ideologically. Both ran rich white southern men from a business background, and the fact that these people are celebrating the fact that Bush was elected, sort of, is sad, especially since half the people in this country who could vote opted not to. What does that say for our choices? The only reason that the Green Party was even brought up towards the end is because it might have been a factor in the votes it was taking away from the two main candidates. If a

are wasting now completely outweighs the downsides we would face if it was legalized. The way it is now is ridiculous. It's cluttering up the system and tying up a lot of money and resources that could be much better spent elsewhere. The fact is that there are still mandatory minimums that have been carried over from the '80s, when if you were caught with a minimal amount of drugs on you, you were locked up. All because we want to take some moral stance against drugs? Meanwhile, all the alcoholics are killing over 50,000 people a year. I don't think alcohol or drugs should be illegal. I think we should take some of this money that we use to lock these people up and control these people and set up some

sense!

**Russ:** Yeah, I guess so.

**Brett:** What do you think of a band like PROPAGANDHI, being from another country, Canada, and now putting out their fourth consecutive record bitching about America? I absolutely love that band to death, but how much sense does that make?

**Russ:** I wouldn't get it if I hadn't spent time in Canada. I would never try to pretend that I fully understand the Canadian psyche, but I have read and studied a lot of what goes on up there



and how they view things. It seems that anytime America does anything, we inadvertently drag Canada along with us. They seem to be overwhelmed by us, so I think there's a lot of resentment there. (at this point, Russ had to help me open my beer, as I was trying to balance too many things at once) If it takes a straight edge guy to help someone else with their beer, it doesn't get any worse than that! Anyways, how many Americans can name all of the provinces in Canada? How many can even name the prime minister? Yet Canadians can't afford to not be able to be familiar with the U.S. They have to be very much in tune with what America is doing because it will inevitably be affecting them down the road. In that sense, it does make sense that a Canadian band would have such strong opinions about a country that they aren't even from, because they are singing about a country that greatly influences their own politics but otherwise ignores them for the most part. Heck, they live on a border town too. That makes it even worse.

**Brett: What's CREEP DIVISION all about?**

**Russ:** That's a side project. I play bass, Chuck plays guitar, Craig from SICK OF IT ALL sings, and Joe Fish from FURY 66 plays drums. S.O.I.A. took GOOD RIDDANCE to Australia on tour, and Craig and Chuck came up with the idea of doing a band that had a real salty VFW Hall sound. Like if you went to a Vets Hall show in '85, we would be the fourth band on a 6-band bill. We wanted shitty equipment and generic songs and to be able to really capture the "spirit of youth" kind of thing. It started off as a joke, and we played some shows. It was supposed to get worse, but people started getting into it. Since we put out a record, people keep telling me that that's the music that they love and miss. Shitty, generic, and full of angst. It's really fun, and it's a great outlet for us. We are able to play a lot of songs that we would like to play, but which don't really fit into what our real bands are all about.

**Brett: What's up with Lorelei?**

**Russ:** Ah yes, Lorelei Records. Joe

Clements (from FURY 66) and I are starting a new label called Lorelei, and we're putting out Joe's new band called AUDIOCRUSH, which actually has the original GOOD RIDDANCE drummer in it. We have some other cool stuff coming up. We are not going to be a punk label or a HC label. If something we like comes up, we want to be able to put it out.

**Brett:** What about music as a whole. Are you happy with the scene right now?

**Russ:** Yeah, I think so. There are some really great things about it, like the bands we're on tour with right now like KILL YOUR IDOLS and DEATH BY STEREO. They both cross so many musical boundaries, but they're both still great punk bands. I wish the mainstream press and radio would leave the underground alone, but there's nothing I can do about that. Maybe some kid will get into punk through a BLINK-182 video and then dig a little deeper to find some real good stuff. Maybe they'll bring some good to punk at some point, but I'm still real leery of major labels and the corporate version of punk. Maybe I'm just old.

**Brett: What about great up and coming bands? How close are they to being as good as AMERICAN NIGHTMARE?**

**Russ:** (laughs) I really like the new STRIKE ANYWHERE.

**Brett: Were they as good as INQUISITION?**

**Russ:** I don't know about that. INQUISITION was amazing. STRIKE ANYWHERE have really good lyrics, and they also have their own sound. I really like the new KILL YOUR IDOLS record. For some reason, I really like FLOGGING MOLLY as well. I don't know why, but I dig it.

**Brett: Here's the last question, and it's a tricky one. Would you trade in your music career for a shot at the NHL?**

**Russ:** In a second. The only downside to growing up in Santa Cruz is that I didn't get to start playing hockey until I was older.

**Brett: In an ideal world, who would you play for?**

**Russ:** Ideally, I would have played for the Moosejaw Warriors, and then have gotten drafted by the Devils when I turned 18. I would get called up because of an emergency, like somebody got hurt, and I would play so well that that guy would lose his job!

**Brett: I don't think we can end this any "cooler" than in the middle of a hockey fantasy.**

**Russ:** Agreed.

## INTRODUCING DAVE: THE NEW DRUMMER INTERVIEW

**Brett: This is going to be sad for me, but let's talk about the untimely end of one of my all time favorite bands, KID DYNAMITE.**

**Dave:** Well, we had just finished a tour with SNAPCASE and BURIED ALIVE, and we had a tour with HOT WATER MUSIC coming up and a new record coming out, and our singer, on a dime, quit. He had originally moved to Philly to finish film school, but didn't finish because of "the band" and other factors, I would assume. He ended up being one or two credits short of what he needed to graduate, so he didn't quite finish school. He had a film that was completed, a really good documentary on that Stalin place, Dog 13. It was really a bad ass film and he felt like he was kind of letting his film career slip away, if you will. He was letting it slip by. He wanted to get his film out there and get it shopped around, so he wanted to move on it and get rolling and finish film school, but he had no time because of band practice three times a week. And when we didn't practice we had shows or tours, so he basically had no time. I think he got a little over his head when he



originally signed up with the band, because he knew what Dan and I wanted to do which was devote ourselves completely to a band. When it became clear to him that we were going to be a full-time band, he kind of balked a little bit. If those are the real reasons that he wanted to leave, I commend him for it. If he had other aspirations in life, maybe it wasn't a good decision. If I was his age at that time, I wouldn't have quit, you know. I would have gotten out and done a little bit more around the world, and seen how far I could take my career before kind of cutting it off...I won't say "at our prime." I mean, KID DYNAMITE was no SICK OF IT ALL, you know, but we were the new, young, up and comings, and we weren't doing too badly, ya know? It would have been nice to see how far that would have gone.

**Brett:** It probably tasted worse to Dan more than anybody to have a band break up two weeks before the second release on Jade Tree? Doesn't that reek of irony?

**Dave:** Yeah, although I don't know exactly when LIFETIME fell apart in relation to the "Jersey's Best Dancers" release. I couldn't tell ya the exact chronology of it, but yeah, fuck yeah. Dan pours everything he's got into a band, and then a couple of people freak out and it's over and he goes through the same thing again. It's gotta be very, very frustrating. It's frustrating for me; I gave that band everything I had, so...

**Brett:** But you've got two of the best records out there to show for it.

**Dave:** Thanks. I listen to "Shorter Faster Louder", and I think it's probably the best fucking thing I've done to date, including the new Good Riddance records. I think that sound-wise, drumming-wise, our songs were really clicking...

**Brett:** Dan is now playing again, seemingly with everyone from KID DYNAMITE. Are you part of that?

**Dave:** Yeah, we are. Dan had an idea, a project in mind.

**Brett:** His Wu-Tang band?

**Dave:** Yeah, exactly. Multiple singers, similar song bodies with them slightly augmented to fit different singers. Some of them he had in mind: Chris from SAVES THE DAY, Ari...

**Brett:** What do you think of SAVES THE DAY?

**Dave:** I think their new record is great. I think it is their best record yet, although I like all three of them.

**Brett:** I like their first record, but I just fucking hated the fact that they just came out of nowhere, fucking ripped off LIFETIME so much, and started with essentially the same fan base as LIFETIME.

**Dave:** Yeah.

**Brett:** That just totally bummed me out. Ya know, you go out and create your own sound, and it's a hit. Even if it's not a hit, at least you've made your own sound. But for SAVE THE DAY to rip LIFETIME off so badly on their first record...and then, on their next record, they moved toward a JAWBREAKER sound, and their current record is moving into JETS TO BRAZIL territory! The biggest irony of it all is that their new record is called "Stay What You Are". WHAT? What are they talking about?

**Dave:** Yeah, but I can't help it, but like the new record. I got a promo sent to me...

**Brett:** This is like the part we edit out. (laughs)

**Dave:** I don't give a fuck. Anything I say you can print. That's probably the main thing GOOD RIDDANCE is going to end up hating me for. You and I go back far enough to know that I'll let it fly! But yeah, I really like the new SAVES THE DAY record, I think it is slammin'. Where was I? Oh yeah, Dan's new project. It

features Chris from SAVES THE DAY, Ari is going to sing, probably...he told me that the project was getting a little too ambitious, so he decided to condense it into two bands. One is with myself, Spider (KD's bass player), our friend David on guitar (who was a KD roadie who was more of a loyal friend than a roadie), and Dan on vocals.

**Brett:** I'm kinda' scared to hear that.

**Dave:** Should be interesting. It's the heavier end of the KD stuff.

**Brett:** That's funny. His back-up vocals on the record are HORRIBLE, but when you listen to them you realize that they were exactly what was needed there. That ended up being perfect. But I can't imagine him singing on the whole record. That's going to...

**Dave:** Yeah, it should be interesting. I haven't heard it yet, because he's been singing into a screwdriver or a wrench or whatever. We practice at his friend's carpentry workshop, and he has yet to buy a PA. He's probably bought one now that I am out here, so he's working on that.

**Brett:** Aren't you doing the other band with him, the LIFETIME recreation thing?

**Dave:** Yeah, Ari, David, Glendace, myself, and Dan. So far it has been Dan and I - Dan on a 4-track, and Dan and I practicing about twice a week when I am home...and Ari has a 4-track tape to write lyrics. Those guys are fully enthused about doing the band. More so than maybe Dan himself. Ya know, they have to call Dan and make sure he's not going to back out because of his doctor appointments and what not, because they are really jazzed to do it. I'm going to give it all of my time when I'm home and try to do it as much this year as I did last year.

**Brett:** What did you think of the ZERO ZERO album?



**Dave:** The final product I liked. It wasn't what I thought it was going to be, because I had seen them play live and heard the MALCONTENTS demo, which was basically ZERO ZERO before they changed their name, and I recently just got that demo on CD. My friend made me a CDR, and I think that it's brilliant. It's like the good ELVIS COSTELLO/CLASH-sounding stuff, and I like it a lot more than I like the record. But I also like STEREO LAB, I like BLUR, I still like some of that stuff and I like the record as well. So, I'm not as jazzed about it as I am about the older stuff, but I still like it. It's tough for me to really like a band that doesn't have a real live drummer.

**Brett:** Aren't they getting a live bassist and live drummer?

**Dave:** They did some live sets with just keyboards and programming machines,

eventually agreed to join, I dunno, half a year later, for the Fat Tour.

**Brett:** So when Shawn quit, you were asked. Obviously, they had to go with Dave of LAGWAGON, so can I assume that you weren't able to do it right away?

**Dave:** I just didn't want to move out here. That was kind of like one offer on the table, and it was just sort of "hey, why don't you come out and do the band." I was just dysfunctional, what with KID DYNAMITE breaking up and all. I was just really pissed off and in no mood to move to sunny California.

**Brett:** I was pissed off about KID DYNAMITE myself, so I can ONLY imagine how you felt!

**Dave:** Yeah, I wasn't so much in the mood for bands. But GOOD RIDDANCE

what I would expect knowing that you were drumming. He was more like a metal drummer.

**Dave:** I don't know what his influences are, but he came across to me more like a mechanical drummer or a machine than a normal drummer. That forbidden beat, something I had never heard or listened to until I started buying GR records and Fat label records. I didn't learn it. I said, "fuck that, I've got another beat that will probably work with it," and when they actually recorded "Operation Phoenix", the producers of the record and the band had a lot to do with augmenting his stuff slightly, in such a way that it was more stripped down but still as solid. Shawn's got the fastest foot that I've ever fucking heard. It was a challenge for me to up my ante 'cause I was this barefoot Mongoloid behind the drums that played and put shit where I wanted to, which worked for me. There is a lot more precision in GR music, so I fucking put shoes on, I put

**"I don't know what his influences are, but he came across to me more like a mechanical drummer or a machine than a normal drummer."**

and I guess it didn't go too well. I wasn't there, so I don't know, I heard that the reviews were bad. I think Darren was saying "it's one of those shows that I hope that no one knows about. I now own Jade Tree."

**Brett:** That's brilliant!

**Dave:** I think that was brilliant, too.

**Brett:** How did you hook up with Good Riddance?

**Dave:** Russ called me shortly after Shawn quit, and shortly after Jason quit KID DYNAMITE and asked me to join the band. We had toured together, and we had played midweek and weekend shows with them and A.F.I. years before we toured. They had been longtime friends with Dan from LIFETIME. We got shows because they were friends. I

came around; they came up from DC and stopped by for some good food, and we sat down and worked it out. They bribed me or greased my palm, if you will.

**Brett:** What's it like flying ten hours to band practice?

**Dave:** Strange, but the more I do it, the shorter the flight seems. I've done it several times now, it seems, and so far so good. It takes a couple days to adjust to the time difference. It's a strange concept, but it works for me. It doesn't seem to phase me. I rehearse at home on my own with the record, and they send tapes out.

**Brett:** How was it jumping in and playing Shawn's stuff? You play it differently, not so much that it changes the song, but it's definitely more of your flavor and more of

grip tape on my foot pedal, and I dug in for a month and a half and really learned how to concentrate. Not necessarily how to write that kind of shit, but at least how to really control my foot as opposed to letting it control me, which is the way I normally play drums. It was always just "go play". I'm a better drummer for learning Shawn's stuff, since it's not the easiest thing in the world. I used to get shit loads of cramps, my shins hurt, it was almost impossible to play. Before it was like, "oh yeah, GR, I can play that shit, I just won't play that beat." Still, all the other stuff on "Phoenix" is not that easy, but I feel like I am a better drummer for it. Even my experience with this latest record improved at least that facet of my drumming.

**Brett:** Was "Phoenix" your favorite Good Riddance record? At least, your favorite before this new record? It's certainly the most pissed



**off record!**

**Dave:** Yeah, to my knowledge, although the first GR stuff that I really heard was "Ballads". I actually got that one on tape and that was the one I really, really liked – the one with all the heavy shit.

Anything that was all just teeth, I loved it, and when "Phoenix" came out, I said to myself, "this band is fucking amazing". I really liked that record. I can assure you that that was a novelty. It won't happen again. It was the "low point" in the aura of the band, if you will.

know what I mean? It was interesting. It made me into a better drummer, for better for worse.

**Brett: Do you feel you are a full member of GR, or is it like...**

**Dave:** Yeah, absolutely. I always was from the get go. It was just because of the flights and the fact that I was playing somebody else's material, because their style was so different. Like I said earlier, it kind of felt like a foreign world to me, but this last weekend, the

show was a basement show, other than at this huge festival where we played for 30 people. The first show with the band was more like a KD show, no stage, no monitors, everybody in your face going crazy, which was fun. The next day, with the stage and the monitors, it was all a little tougher getting used to the feel of the band. I am used to having the amps behind me and having that be all I hear. Just raw drums, whereas now I am getting fine-tuned. I get to EQ my own drums because I know what sounds best. It was a little hard getting used to. This band has had some stuff incorporated

**"I don't want to sound cocky, but I have never been to a GR show that has been as crazy as a Philly KD show."**

**Brett: "Phoenix" was?**

**Dave:** Yeah, it was probably written in a very dark time and therefore won't be duplicated again. I think the new record has a really good blend of "Phoenix" and other things. It's got melody, but in some instances it's got teeth underneath it and on top.

**Brett: I think it's got a lot of "Comprehensive Guide" mixed in.**

**Dave:** Sure. There must be 9 million bass drum hits on "Comprehensive Guide."

**Brett: Ya think? (laughs)**

**Dave:** Maybe that's only half, maybe there's 18 million, I dunno. There's none of that on the new record, but it's got a good blend of the past stuff and a little bit of me. Not much, at least in the way I'd of...I mean, I can go back and say, good record, I can hear a little bit of me on it, which is cool, but it's not my band. I'm new to the band, so I blend with their sound. Hopefully we can push and pull a little, give and take. I learned a lot, writing and recording the record. I opened some eyes, closed some others, ya

last bit we did in Canada and the Hawaii dates, I felt like I put more of my drumming style into the old material, if you will. I experimented to the point where I can feel comfortable in the groove and not feel compelled to be so mechanical. I can let it be me. And the new stuff, as much as it's not necessarily my style, it's all me recording, and it feels good. Some of the stuff I felt really uncomfortable playing, drum pedaling-wise, but I think they're the best songs on the record.

**Brett: Is it weird for you to jump into a band that is very well-established and has such a big following and big shows, as opposed to KD, where there weren't many people the first time you played in San Francisco, but where as time passed, the audiences got huge? Do you miss the growth element in it? Obviously, there's nothing you can do about it.**

**Dave:** That was the biggest disappointment in losing KD. Dan and I put the first two beans in the ground and watched it grow. And this is a transplant, a 3,000-mile transplant. I think I am more comfortable with it now. There were elements that I wasn't used to, like not always playing big cities. GR's first

into their life that I was not used to, such as playing long 45 minute sets. 45 minutes was like a marathon session for KD. There are lots of little differences like that. But I think that after over almost a year of being in the band, we've kind of both moved towards a middle ground. We've shortened our live set this tour. We're having a real high impact. We just tear into our songs and then say "later." Punk bands, ya know, come out and play 20 minutes and say goodbye.

**Brett: I agree.**

**Dave:** Ya can't play 20 minutes these days if you headline a \$10 show. You've got to play 30 minutes, and you get into playing 40 minutes at the most.

**Brett: Yeah, the punk attitude of leaving people wanting more is a great approach - if the punters want more, they'll have to see you the next time or go buy the record.**

**Dave:** That is just the way I felt. I think we came to a great compromise with the band in writing the set list. We scaled it down a bit, we have a prepared encore, we sound check it, but we're not going to play it every night. I always want to leave people wanting a little more.



**Brett:** How would you compare GR in Santa Cruz to the last KD shows in Philly?

**Dave:** Well, there is no comparison between a KD show in Philadelphia and any GR show I've seen. I don't want to sound cocky, but I have never been to a GR show that has been as crazy as a Philly KD show. We seemed to be giving every single person in the room exactly what they wanted at that time. They seemed to have saved up all of their energy for us. They might have danced for every band that played, but any time we played in Philly, it just seemed to

**Brett:** I know you have a split with KILL YOUR IDOLS coming out in Jade Tree. Were you the link to Jade Tree? Were you already talking to them?

**Dave:** Yeah, I'm it. The sole link, if you will. Jade Tree is doing a series of splits. I guess I'd get yelled at if I mentioned all the bands, but they've got a lot of fucking killer bands that are going to surprise people. These are bands that they have always wanted to work with, but never could because they don't give advances. They had to sign to other labels because

rippin', mid-tempo, strong lyric song, than more of a – not so much a power ballad, but a good pop rock song – and the last is like a killer, which is what we have to put on the end to try and show up K.Y.I.. They are blowing our asses out the door with their fucking rock. It's weird, the K.Y.I. songs on the split have more influences from the bands they've toured with over the last couple of years than of their other songs. I think they are the best K.Y.I. songs I have heard in a long time. They have a lot more melody in them, yet they are still K.Y.I. songs, if that is possible. So I am pretty stoked about it.



me – maybe it was because I was "lost in my own world" playing – that in Philly, New Jersey, and sometimes even New York, the shows were just really raw. Fucking chaos. It was great. We played some great shows last weekend in Sacramento. I am not saying GR shows aren't high energy. Maybe it's just me, only having been in the band for a year. It wasn't my band from the start, but I just kind of felt that those last two KD shows were a total fucking mess. It was great.

**Brett:** I remember you used to, but are you still following the vegan lifestyle?

**Dave:** I have pretty much a vegan diet.

**Brett:** So it kind of fits in. I was wondering if you were sneaking over to Taco Bell while everyone else was down the street at the Long Life Veggie House!

**Dave:** No, it was one of the prerequisites for my joining the band: a 4-piece kit, being a vegetarian, and having a strong desire for veganism. I eat honey.

they needed to get paid. Darren is currently the most hardcore listener of the two owners of Jade Tree, but they both still appreciate and listen to punk rock and hardcore. Darren really liked the last GR album, "Phoenix", and when I was in the band it wasn't even a thought. They were trying to get K.Y.I., but the band had to go with Side One because of financial strings. But I'm really excited for it. It comes out November 20. Four songs for us, three for them. Shit, I forgot how good the songs are. I hear it once in a blue moon. We recorded it the same time we recorded "Spirit Symptoms", our new record.

**Brett:** Are the songs for the split a little more aggressive?

**Dave:** Actually, in my humble opinion, they're like the four corners of the GR "Twister" game.

**Brett:** You mean, a sampling of what you do?

**Dave:** Yeah. It comes out with a nice strong fast tune, followed by a nice, good,

**Brett:** By the way, when you got off the plane wearing a Flyers jersey, did the other guys give you any shit?

**Dave:** Russ attempts to give me shit constantly about Philadelphia sports figures, as well as about the Flyers, but I just don't listen to him. I always have an earplug in, whichever side he stands on.

**Brett:** He was just upstairs, giving me the 1-2 about Eric Lindros.

**Dave:** Fuck Lindros.

**Brett:** WOW!

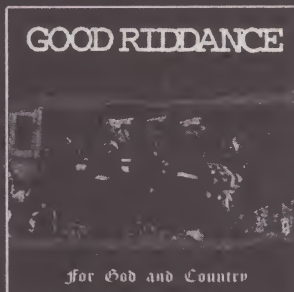
**Dave:** He's not a Flyer.

**Brett:** Still backing Keith Primo?

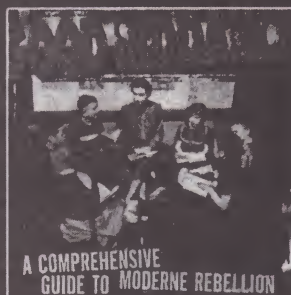
**Dave:** I love Primo and love Jeremy Ronach. We're going to have a good season this year. I love the Uni-Brow on goal. He's fucking strong. Ya know, it kind of fell to pieces during the All-Star Game last year, but it's alright – it's only the All-Star Game. +



# GOOD RIDDANCE



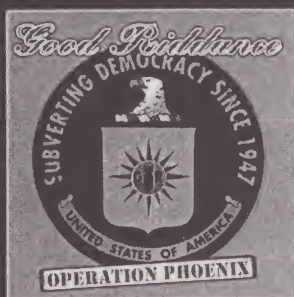
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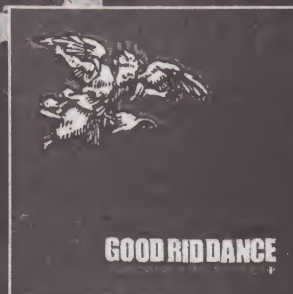
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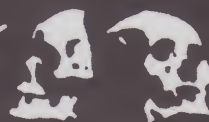
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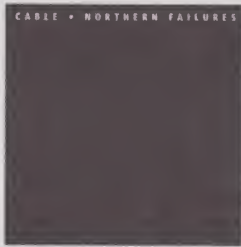
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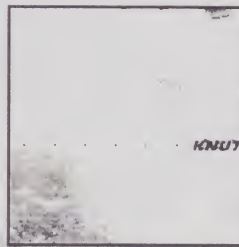
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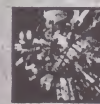


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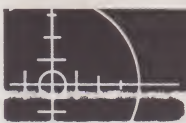
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## 1. POSITION OF A PUNK, OVER 40, 32,000 FEET ABOVE THE UNITED STATES FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE SEPTEMBER 11.

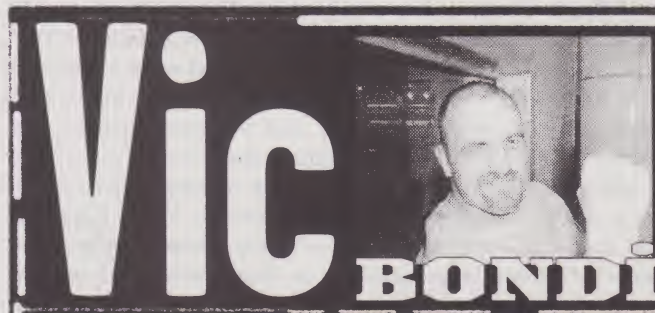
I am flying above the American heartland for the first time since the attacks. Below, things look as they did before: rolling hills brown with autumn, long harrows of farmers. So far, aboard the plane, things also seem as they did. No holy nihilists have sprung from their seats and plowed us into a capitalist landmark; no bomb has exploded and plunged us towards earth. Still, the woman next to me crossed herself at take-off, and the tension at SeaTac was palpable. The car in front of us caught fire as my wife deposited me at curbside, and immediately police and firemen cordoned off the area and detained two suspects, housewives from Tacoma who forgot to change their oil. Anxiety at the newsstand, too, in the headlines with each anthrax case. And in the waiting lounge, an Arab trio muttered to each other in a far corner away from the rest of the passengers.

Whatever the view at 32,000 feet, things have changed. We aren't used to the soldiers and security and the disruption of it all to our cultivated and cherished sense of convenience. No matter the admonitions of pampered movie stars and practiced politicians, every dark-skinned man with remotely Arab features is suspected. Travelers eye them warily, afraid of betraying the conflict between their political correctness and their own sense of well-being. But fuck it, we're at war, and everyone is enlisted—if not by Bush as potential soliders, than by Osama as potential victims. Since most of the people in the airport would choose neither role, they can be forgiven the momentary prejudices blossoming from their endangered self-interest. Americans in peacetime are for the most part tolerant and liberal. But in wartime they are, well, different.

How different remains to be seen. Some newspaper columnists, for example, speculated that September 11 may permanently turn Americans from frenzied materialism to introspective values. I'm dubious. It only took four days for Hollywood's ego-machine to churn out a wretched "telethon" in tribute to the WTC firefighters. Awed as I was by the spectacle of multi-millionaires sparing a whole two hours of their time to raise less money than it took to make "Titanic", a glimpse of the French-Canadian princess of attitude, Celine Dion, mangling "God Bless America" assured me that the American lust for kitsch and hypocrisy remains untouched. Still, for one tragic instant the entire rancid blare of American culture stopped. The talking heads didn't know what to say. The experts were clueless, the

authorities confused. Celebrities disappeared from public view. Even if you didn't know about the Attack, you knew something horrible had happened: on TV - *there were no ads.*

It couldn't last. By evening Wednesday, the AVID editors in the backrooms of the networks had spliced together footage and patriotic music and commoditized the whole thing into another disgusting prime-time special: "Attack on America"; "America Under Seige"; "America Under Attack". The usual shills and spin-doctors were lobbed journalistic puff-balls by the usual corporate news



anchors: "You know, Stone, they've attacked us because they hate our *freedom.*"

The White House was back to lying (Gosh, Ari Fliescher, if the terrorists were targeting Air Force One, why did you have the Shrub riding around in it the entire goddamned day?). By Friday, we had the aforementioned Hollywood hoedown. By Saturday the cartoons and the ads were back on. By the following week, the pith and marrow of the American body politic finally returned to our lives: professional sports. And the Bush administration didn't ask us to cut back on driving to save gas, or stop buy-

ing SUVs to lessen our dependence on foreign oil, or anything like what they did during WWII. Instead, they asked us to get out there and buy, buy, buy. At last, things were getting back to normal.

*It's quite likely that Offspring and Ramones CDs are used by Marines to hype themselves up for battle, but I doubt if that qualifies as making a contribution.*

## 2. THE SOUND OF THINGS COLLAPSING

Normal means punk has nothing to contribute to the culture after 9/11. It's quite likely that Offspring and Ramones CDs are used by Marines to hype themselves up for battle, but I doubt if that qualifies as making a contribution. During the Gulf War it was pretty clear the US was up to its old habits of liquidating



# HIT SQUAD

arms surpluses by killing brown people. It was easy to write songs about that; our contribution then was what it had been under Reagan: CNN from the street. But the attacks on the WTC were different, and the Taliban don't lend themselves well to satire-the fuckers ban all music, after all.

Still, I was pleased to see that no punk group participated in the "Tribute to Egos," and that a lot of punks contributed to direct disaster relief in NYC. Craig O'Hara and AKPress kept sending fairly lively e-mails after 9/11-it was good to see some dissent out there, even if I usually disagreed with most of the postings.

But I think we can safely assume that the crop of Blink-182 clones out there will offer up zero in the way of insight on this. Some rich suburban kids probably have penned some inane song about killing Osama or some other vindictive bullshit, but crap like that didn't matter before 9/11, and it doesn't matter now. Stuff on the other side of the spectrum doesn't play out either: songs that are gleeful about the towers coming down, or the jumpers, are just offensive, and not *offensive*. What happened was not cool, not a simulation, not a movie. Those people died.

There is, I think, a perspective on this that's worth singing about, which I'll get to below. Suffice it to say that I kept playing two songs on my computer after September 11th-only one of which was a punk song, and one that had very little to do with the attacks. If you've never heard the Hüsker Dü's cover of the Byrds "Eight Miles High," download it (or better still, since SST

is one of the better independent labels out there, go buy the CD single), because it's one of the greatest blasts of sheer hardcore angst ever recorded. I listened to it repeatedly, not because it had anything directly to do with September 11th, but because Bob Mould screams throughout the track as though he's losing everything. It's an astonishing, relentless cut, and I think that one reason I kept playing the file was because it sounds like things are collapsing on Mould-and he makes it out alive, nonetheless. Like John Lennon's primal scream stuff, the song is almost pure emotional catharsis, and the fact that he makes it through the song without breaking down says something not only about his personal perseverance, but about the transcendent power of music. What everyone was running to in Bruce Springsteen and Paul McCartney and Faith Hill and Whitney Houston is found, raw and unmediated, in the Hüsker track: suffering, grief, and the capacity to move beyond it. None of this perverse, inflated sense of the tragic, but something that punk rock delivers better than any other form of music: the real thing.

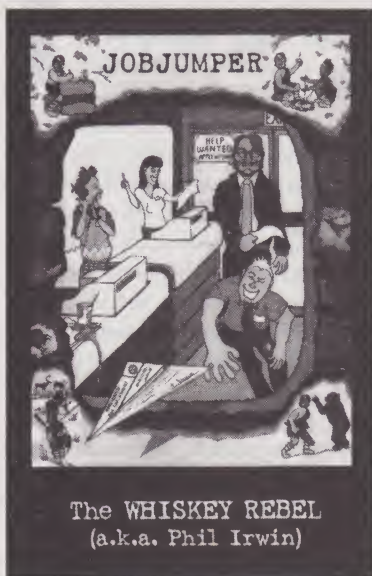
## 3. LEGITIMATION CRISIS

Truth be told, the Left's response to September 11th was about as irrelevant and depressing as the Tribute to Egos. No one managed to articulate a perspective on the Attacks that went beyond the ideological positions held before September 11th. At the very least, some sense of regret at the death of their friends and neighbors seemed in order. The best that people like Susan Sontag and Noam Chomsky could muster was a pallid argument that American foreign policy was responsible for the Attack. True enough, in a way, but an argument that ventured

awfully close to absolving the terrorists of responsibility for the murders, and one that mirrored Jerry Falwell's comment that Americans brought this on themselves. Christopher Hitchens's meltdown about the Left opposition in the *Nation* and the *New Yorker* was understandable, but even he didn't have a clear perspective on the event, something as simple as the idea that fundamentalism in any form, be it Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, was a danger to modern society.

But then, much of the Left builds their politics from fairly dogmatic fundamentals, from identity politics and self-righteous piety. One person that doesn't is German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Outside of academic circles, Habermas isn't well known in this country, which is a shame. His work has managed to fuse the best aspects of the American philosophical tradition, pragmatism, to the best of the European philosophical tradition, Critical Theory, to create a thoroughly modern and radical-critique of modern society. Anyone on the Left who wants to build their progressivism from a rigorous but non-dogmatic perspective should familiarize themselves with Habermas, and, in light of the Attacks of 9/11, almost everyone should reread Habermas's essay from 1974, "Legitimation Problems in the Modern State," which was incorporated into his 1975 study,

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—Alex Richmond, Philadelphia City Paper

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Trying to make sense of the economic and social paralysis of the early seventies, Habermas argued that the modern state inevitably finds itself torn between two conflicting goals. On one hand, the state acts as an agent to maintain and advance the economic goals of the bourgeoisie; on the other hand, the state acts as an agent moderating the socially corrosive effects of capitalism (primarily through minimum wages, universal education, and social security). The problem is that in order to limit the effects of capitalism, the state must necessarily curb the economic advances of the bourgeoisie, who continue to maintain the fiction that the market is free of coercive power. Conversely, in order to maximize the advances of the bourgeoisie, the state must limit and restrict social welfare programs. Either approach calls to question the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the offended party: if capitalism is overly regulated, the bourgeoisie withdraw their support; if education and social programs are too severely restricted, the mass of people revolt. Finding the balance between them is impossible because capitalism is inherently a socially corrosive force—the “free” market, whatever its pretenses, is inevitably invested with coercive power over the lives of the mass of people. Accordingly, modern democracies find themselves in a series of recurrent crises over the legitimacy of governance.

As a socialist, Habermas expresses confidence that the ultimate resolution of the legitimation crises of capitalist democracies will require a thorough restructuring of the political economy along equalitarian lines. But he is not an eschatological theorist who automatically assumes that one of the legitimation crises of modern capitalism will spark a revolution that leads mechanistically to the downfall of capitalism. He is all too aware of the capacity of States to mediate crises via compromise; more to the point, he argues that inevitably legitimation crises in multinational economic systems are displaced to developing nations—a point the current political crisis in Argentina demonstrates with remarkable clarity. As do the Attacks of September 11th.

## 4. WHY THERE WILL BE MORE ATTACKS.

Let's face it: things won't get back to normal. The way things are now *is* normal. Because this is the way things have always been, behind the gaudy opacity of middle-class complacency: bad people have always been out there in the world doing horrible things *for* us; now bad people are out there doing things *to* us. Lo and behold, they're the same people, but I don't think too many Americans are consoled by the fact that Osama's *mujahidin* were once our bitches.

Certainly not our elites. They're terrified that the guys entrusted to take care of our oil are either too weak to maintain power, or, like Osama, have gone over to the enemy. The dictators of nations like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan—all of whom derive their power from their relationship to the West—encouraged Islamic fundamentalism for decades as a means of defusing the democratic aspirations of their masses. They now find themselves threatened by a political phenomenon that has outlived its utility: a militantly anti-modern movement that intends to equalize social disparities by leveling them to one oppressive ideology.

In its retrograde absolutism, this movement is of a piece with

its twentieth century predecessors such as fascism, but it is also of a piece with the late twentieth-century growth of religious orthodoxies around the globe, such as Hindu and Sikh nationalism in India, and Evangelical Christianity in the Americas. Orthodoxy grows during periods of widespread social and economic change (the term “fundamentalism” was born during the social disruptions of the late 19th century), especially among individuals whose traditional mode of life is being displaced. Orthodoxy restores a necessary self-esteem to displaced peoples, one that transcends the economic order of the moment. But it also provides a path to radical politics: Since God is generous and wouldn't punish righteous people with wretched living conditions, someone else must be to blame. For the Christian Right at home, it's the liberals, the gays, or the intellectuals; among the Taliban, it's the Christians, the Americans, or the Westerners (both blame feminists and Jews). A generation ago, displaced people might have turned to socialism or Marxism to make sense of their situation, but since the end of the Cold War our sophisticated Western economists have stripped rationalist explanations of their validity. Irrational explanations and scapegoats are all that are left.

The growth of post-Cold War religious orthodoxies is in fact paralleled, reinforced, and enabled by the growth of an economic orthodoxy that is the ideological force behind (in Vice-President Cheney's phrase) “the new normalcy.” For the adherents of this orthodoxy, it has become fundamental that markets are a democratizing, populist force; that supply-side economics and monetary policy are the key to sustainable markets; and that globalization—whatever its costs to the environment and to labor—is a beneficent social force. They also believe that religion can better serve meliorist social functions than can the secular, liberal welfare state. They've attacked both liberalism and the welfare state relentlessly. The Republican party in the United States, home to the economic Orthodox, builds its political base around free market absolutists and politicized clerics. Accordingly, it's logical that the Bush II administration's first policy agenda was the public financing of private charities. The underlying theory is writ to modern Conservatives: free markets are best, and their social dislocations are best addressed by clerics.

The irony is that Osama's brand of orthodoxy is less deeply held than that of our economic fundamentalists. So far, his support among Muslims is less widespread than was initially supposed—at least this appears to be the case, filtered through a Western press that has passed on unbiased reporting—and it appears that most Muslims do not share his Manichean outlook towards the West. Our Economic Orthodoxy, on the other hand, continues to think of the world in terms of its fundamentals. Initially, it seemed, they might moderate policy in the interest of undermining Osama's appeal. By the New Year, however, we are back to orthodoxy: After some photo ops in Mosques and some pro-Palestinian commentary, the Bush administration has affirmed its support for Sharon and Israel; after some ill-timed remarks on 9/11 by the Talibanesque duo of Falwell and Robertson, fences are mended between the GOP and the Christian Right (at least judging by the commentary on the great GOP/Fox News propaganda apparatus); and Bush continues to rack up Reagan-sized deficits, undermining the long-term viability of Social Security.

Which is, of course, pretty normal. For all the speculation



# HIT SQUAD

about how the Attacks of 9/11 would change us as a nation, and as a world, what has been most remarkable is how little anything has actually changed. The Taliban are out, with attendant uncounted casualties, but how much positive change (especially for women) will come to Afghanistan remains to be seen. Osama has yet to be found, which only means he is well on his way to becoming the Emmanuel Goldstein of the 21st century. Terrorism seems contained, manageable, so long, of course, that no one gets too adamant about maintaining civil liberties, or minds too much if a few thousand civilians die in extremist acts now and then (Phillip Morris, after all, kills more people annually than does Osama). There was a brief, temporary change in the mood. But there has been no reconsideration of values or methods. There has been no systemic change, for good or ill, to the American way of life, or to the lives of anyone else.

Everything has changed, and yet nothing has changed. But that's the point, right? By the terms of Bush's initial response to 9/11, to change what we are and how we go about our business would mean that the terrorists have won. But it also means that a recurrence of what happened on 9/11 is almost inevitable, because economic orthodoxy breeds religious orthodoxy. Since the moderate response to economic orthodoxy is a priori excluded from modern discussion, we will have more politics driven by fundamentalists. And more, it means this: all those people; all those mothers, fathers, wives and husbands, sisters and brothers who died in the Twin Towers, in the Pentagon, in Afghanistan, in Pakistani refugee camps, in Gaza and Israel... All of them have died in vain.

## 5. THE PUNK COLONIC, NOW MORE THAN EVER.

During the Gulf War, the government tried hard to convince a disbelieving public that the war wasn't about oil. We all knew it was. No one today thinks the war on terror is about oil, but it is, although not in any direct fashion. What's happening in the Middle East today is a classic legitimization crisis in the sense that Habermas articulated nearly thirty years ago: a conflict between the economic goals of Western capitalism and the social effects of unregulated capitalism. Globalization is simply the latest manifestation of a series of economic and political practices by which Western economies installed economic elites to act as administrators of coveted natural resources. That those same elites didn't bother to create the host of social institutions—free elections, wage rates, schools, and retirement programs—by which bourgeois governments maintain their legitimacy in the western polities shouldn't surprise. Their goal was to maximize and advance wealth. They thought, following the Orthodoxy of the West, that their clerics would handle the social dislocations

of a modern economy. Clearly, they were wrong. But I doubt that they've drawn the same conclusion.

The economic Orthodox believe that control of information is the key in offsetting and controlling legitimization crises. If only the elites in the Middle East would stop broadcasting displays of wealth and opulence on the airwaves, their publics would be much pacified (quit educating them, too; after all, ignorance is bliss). Perception is everything. Accordingly, the Bush administration has pulled out all the stops to get Al-Jazeera off the air, and has managed to coerce a level of conformity from the press here that is unprecedented. But it makes sense: the corporate press has as much to lose from a legitimization crisis as does the government.

Which brings us back to punk, and the one way-in the current environment-in which punk and rock 'n' roll is relevant: as news from the ground up, as a critique of the way things are, as an expression of a wish for better

things. That doesn't mean punk has to be ideological or overtly political, and it doesn't mean punk has to sound like a formula.

It doesn't mean that the music even has to be punk. The other song I listened to repeatedly after 9/11 was Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son." It was written during Vietnam, when politicians and rich men like George Herbert Walker Bush managed to finagle deferments for their sons. The guitars churn and the drums stomp and the lyrics are the single greatest expression of all the class bullshit that was flowing then-and is flowing down now, all over us:

*Some folks are born  
Made to wave the flag  
Ooh...that red, white and blue  
And when the band plays "Hail to the Chief"  
They point the cannon at you  
It ain't me, it ain't me: I ain't no senator's son  
It ain't me, it ain't me: I ain't no fortunate one*

"Fortunate Son," brought the war home. It was a spark to and a reflection of the awareness that many 60's activists had that the war against poor people abroad was an extension of the war against working people at home. A cover of this song, posted on the Internet today, would be worth more than all the self-serving "Tribute to Heroes" crap that's spewing out of the record industry. (What if Neil Young had covered this, instead of "Imagine"?) It would make sense. It would be relevant. It would remind us who we really are. And it would be punk as fuck.

Don't get me wrong. The world's a better place for the death of the Taliban, as it would be if Osama were dead. But the causes of the war aren't going to end with their deaths, or with the death of Saddam, or with that of some fanatical warlord in Somalia. The only way the war is going to end is to direct it against the orthodoxies, both economic and religious, that place the satisfactions and pieties of a few above basic human needs. The only way the war is going to end is to direct it against the management ethos that insists that publicity and the control of information can compensate for basic justice. The only way the war is going to end is to bring the war home.. ☺



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# 'You have to kill in the name of Allah until you are killed':

## An underground film showing the slaughter of Algerian soldiers is being used as a recruitment tool for British Islamic radicals

by Jason Burke

**T**he trail runs from a wet corner of a west London street to the dusty mountains of eastern Algeria, from a garage on the Thames to the Mediterranean, from a mosque off north London's Seven Sisters Road to Osama bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan. In one direction the trail is a conduit for volunteers and money — both heading for Islamist rebels fighting a brutal war against Algeria's government. In the other direction flow political refugees, communiqués boasting of the numbers of 'infidels' murdered each month and, towards the end of last year, a single smuggled video. Rumours of the video had been circulating for several weeks. There was even talk about it in the bazaars of war-racked cities in eastern Afghanistan. It was reputed to be of appalling violence — and one of the most effective recruiting tools ever used by a terrorist group. It was also said to be circulating in the UK.

*The Observer* obtained the video last week from a contact within the British Muslim community. It was worse than anything expected. According to the badly printed cover, the video, simply entitled 'Algeria', had been prepared by the 'publicity service (audiovisual section) of the Groupe Salafiste pour Prédication et Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting or GSPC)' — the most radical of the Islamic terrorist groups who have been fighting the Algerian government for more than 10 years. The feared GSPC is one of the groups that has refused a recent government amnesty and truce. It is also closely linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organisation and is thought to have been set up by some of his closest lieutenants using the Saudi-born dissident's money.

Reprinted from *The London Observer*  
(27 January 2002)

According to security sources, the first copy of the GSPC video arrived in the UK just a few days before the 11 September attacks. Since then, bootleg copies have been passed around Britain's extremists who have been anxious to play it to potential recruits. Screenings have been arranged both in private homes and, often after prayers, in mosques. Many showings have been timed so that young people, students and schoolchildren, can attend. Several are alleged to have taken place in Finsbury Park mosque in north London where the radical cleric Abu Hamza often leads prayers.

There are fears that the video could have been used to indoctrinate vulnerable young men who have come to the mosque seeking spiritual guidance following 11 September. 'There are many people at the more radical mosques who come searching for a purpose in life,' said one former MI5 agent who infiltrated Finsbury Park mosque. 'They often know very little about Islam and trust the older men to show them the way. But they are shown the path of violence.'

Both Richard Reid, who was overpowered as he tried to set off explosives in his shoes on a Paris-to-Miami flight last December, and Feroz Abbasi, the 22-year-old former computer student from Croydon who is currently held in Guantánamo Bay prison camp by the Americans, attended Finsbury Park. Abbasi's mother, Juma, last week accused Abu Hamza of brainwashing her son after he had sought spiritual guidance from him 18 months ago.

Last week at the mosque, where worshippers once included Zacarias Moussaoui, the suspected twentieth hijacker, and Djamel Beghal, believed to have been bin Laden's European operations director, *The Observer* was able to buy videos showing shocking footage from Afghanistan and Bosnia. One video called 'The Mirror of the Jihad' showed Taliban

forces in Afghanistan decapitating Northern Alliance soldiers with knives. It was distributed by an Islamic organisation based in Paddington, London. Another video, shot in Bosnia, advocated a 'jihad to wipe out atheism'. Each cost £10. Extremists are increasingly using videos as a means to drum up support and publicise their cause. Last year an al-Qaeda video prepared by Osama bin Laden's group in Afghanistan showing militants training cut with pictures of Israeli soldiers firing on rioting teenagers in Gaza and the West Bank was circulated between radicals worshipping at the Finsbury Park mosque. In the video, bin Laden referred to 'spectacular events to come'.

But none of the videos was as shocking — and as potentially dangerous — as that obtained by *The Observer*. The GSPC video starts with a flickering screen of Arabic script: an injunction to 'Fight them until the sentence of God is carried out on Earth.' Then, with a soundtrack of chanted verses from the Koran, more commands scroll across the screen. 'You have to kill in the name of Allah until you are killed,' viewers are told. 'Then you will win your place forever in Paradise. The whole Islamic world should rise up to fight all the sick unbelievers. The flag of Jihad will be forever held high.' The commentary continues: 'Our enemies are fighting in the name of Satan. You are fighting in the name of God.' Then clear, bright images take the place of the script. From the bushes beside a remote mountain road, guerrillas watch the approach of a government convoy. There is a huge explosion as the trucks hit a bomb, and prolonged firing.

When the militants get to the scene of the blast they find carnage. There are corpses strewn across the ground. One hangs over the tailgate; where once there was a conscript's head there is a mess of bloody matter. Another lies on the ground with his brains, on which the camera lingers, spread around his shattered skull. A fighter nonchalantly fires bullets into a corpse. Then there is excited shouting as the militants notice that one soldier is still alive. 'He is moving, he is moving,' calls out a fighter. A militant calmly bends down and runs a knife across the wounded conscript's throat. The images of the blood pumping from his severed carotid artery is shown five times during the video. The throats of the dead on the ground are then cut too.

Much of the video is less gruesome. A GSPC leader is shown planning an attack and explaining his tactics to his troops.



His men are shown marching through the dusty scrubland of the Algerian hills. Others are shown baking bread, making clothes or dividing weapons and ammunition seized from the dead government troops. They are shown conducting a bizarre ritual: lining up to be blessed by a comrade dressed in black and representing the 'angel of death'.

But soon the video reverts to violence. Another attack is shown: an ambush in which 12 government conscripts — ordinary young men doing their national service — are killed and eight injured. The dogtags and identity papers of the dead are held up to the camera. 'God loves people who kill in his name,' the commentary says. 'The enemies of Islam are scared. The Jews and the Christians know that

thisers or political activists, but the list includes dozens of men implicated in the murders of policemen, soldiers, government officials and innocent civilians.

Many have followed the typical path of Islamic radicals: spending years in Afghanistan during the war against the Soviets before returning to their home countries to lead extremist Muslim movements. They come to Britain to flee the resultant government crackdowns. British police are keen to interview Jordanian-born Abu Qatada, a senior cleric at the Rossmore Road mosque near Baker Street in London. Qatada was top of a list of suspects handed to the Home Secretary by the intelligence services before Christmas to be detained under new internment legislation.

where he met Qatada, who was described by Spanish judge Baltazar Garzón as 'the spiritual leader of Mujahideen across Europe'. Qatada, 42, denies all the charges against him. His lawyer says he is the victim of a 'witch hunt'.

Arab veterans of the Afghan war in London say that, after being granted asylum in the UK in 1993, Qatada became a magnet for leading dissidents on the run from the Middle East and Pakistan. Fighters from conflicts in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt and Palestine flocked to his Islamic centre in White City. In Hamburg, videos of Qatada's lectures were found in the flat used by Mohamed Atta, who led the terrorist attacks on America. Other Islamic tracts written by Qatada were found by

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**'God loves people who kill in his name,' the commentary says. 'The enemies of Islam are scared. The Jews and the Christians know that they have lost [the war] and want to stop us spreading the truth.'**

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Algerian security officers learned about the tape soon after it surfaced in the UK in September. However, although the Algerian ambassador made a formal complaint to the Foreign Office, MI5 and the police are not believed to have seized any copies of the tape or arrested any of those involved in its distribution — despite their identities being widely known. 'We would clearly like to see such a powerful fundraising and recruiting tool taken out of circulation as soon as possible,' said one Algerian security source. It is thought that the same tape has been copied and distributed in France — where there is a large Algerian community, elsewhere in Europe and throughout the Middle East.

Algerian security services have been liaising closely with their British counterparts. They told *The Observer* that the GSPC video has been smuggled in and distributed by a group of Islamic activists based in west and south London who have been living in the UK for several years. The Algerian sources also revealed that there are more than 200 individuals in the UK who are linked to terrorist activities in Algeria alone. Some are merely sympa-

According to one eyewitness, communiqués from the GSPC and other groups acclaiming the deaths of government troops in militant operations in Algeria were, at least until recently, frequently posted on the noticeboard at the Rossmore Road mosque.

British police, who have raided Qatada's West Acton home, are not the only security agency hoping to trace the cleric. The Americans have named him as a terrorist suspect and Jordanian police have alleged his involvement in an abortive attempt to blow up hotels and other tourist sites on Millennium eve. They claim the plot was masterminded by bin Laden.

The disclosure that the new Algerian tape, which is illegal in the UK, was circulated with such ease will increase concern about Britain's seeming inability to round up terror suspects here. Last week, investigators in Spain said they had discovered that two suspected al-Qaeda members arrested in Barcelona were in close contact with other members of the group in Britain. Court documents show that Najib Chaib, a Spaniard of Moroccan origin who was arrested eight days ago in Barcelona, made several visits to London

*The Observer* among the effects of fleeing al-Qaeda figures in Pakistan.

On Friday at Finsbury Park mosque hundreds of worshippers from scores of countries came to pray. In the lobby two vendors sold militant literature and videos with titles like 'Jihad in Afghanistan' and 'Terror in Chechnya'. Cassettes of Islamic militant scholar Ahmed Deedat bore titles like 'Why Islam is the dominant religion' and 'The War Against Rushdie' and there were several hundred cassettes of speeches given by Abu Hamza on sale for £1.50 each. Hamza, who lost one eye and a hand in a mine explosion in Afghanistan, arrived a little after lunchtime, ready to deliver his Friday sermon — the *khutbah*. 'We are under constant surveillance here,' he told his supporters. 'But it is always the way with Islam — we have to fight for what we believe in. Now, more than ever, we have to change people's minds. We have to tell them the evils of democracy, capitalism and communism.'

A few yards away, the videos were selling well. ☙

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# Our Islamic Fifth Column: Radical Clerics are Recruiting British Muslim Kids as Terrorists

By Farrukh Dhondy

**M**y first name gives rise to confusion. It's a common Muslim name, so people I meet, or who read my byline, assume that I am of the faith.

Most recently, in response to a column I write for an Indian paper, in which I confessed to having met a few terrorists in my time and attempted to analyze their limited grasp of the world, I received a lot of hate mail. Some of the e-mailers clearly thought I was a Muslim apostate and reminded me that the penalty for that sin was death. One, who signed himself Zahir Pathan, was more strident. He graphically said I was a Muslim *sin cojones*, as Hemingway would have put it, because I failed to face up to what had to be done. He went on to say, presumably as part of what needed doing, that preparations were under way for the bombing and destruction of Bombay. His tone was swaggering, his e-mail rage directed against one who had, he thought, reneged on Islam.

I haven't. I was born a Zoroastrian, in India, a descendant of refugees from the Muslim conquest of Iran by Arab armies in the seventh century. The India of my childhood was full of superstition, of faith in myriad manifestations of the unseen, but even then one knew that Islam and its followers were distinctive. From the Shia mosque in Poona, where I grew up, there emerged every Moharrum night, the end of Ramzaan, a procession of chanting Muslims in black shirts, cutting themselves with chains and little daggers strung together, in frenzied and bloody penance through the night—a demonstration of a belief beyond the threshold of pain. They believed that theirs was the only creed, that their book was dictated by God, that Hindus were idolators and the worshipers of trees and monkeys, that Zoroastrians were fire-worshipping infidels, and that Christians were an ancient military enemy. Their faith seemed to me even at the time to exclude what it had not invented.

In the searching years of adolescence, when we all tried to come to terms with

the great ideas of democracy, liberalism, the possibilities of life embodied in literature, only the pious Muslims among us seemed impervious to taking part in the passionate arguments. They seemed to have an inbuilt view of the world and of history, formed and sanctioned by the Quran. Even then I wondered: if they would not assimilate the world, how would the world assimilate them?

I arrived in Britain at 20, just when the Muslim migration there, principally from India and Pakistan, was under way. The immigrants were leaving circumstances of grinding poverty and little hope to better themselves materially. They took it for granted that they would be afforded the right to work and live within the cultural and religious freedom that Britain's liberal civilization guaranteed.

During my years in England, I acquainted myself with various groups from the subcontinent who were part of this migration. Most were from peasant backgrounds. The Bangladeshis came to London's East End and found work in the garment industry. The Mirpuris, who came from the part of Kashmir that Pakistan occupied, went to work in the old cotton and woolen mills of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands. They cohered around the mosque, the central symbol of discipline in their lives, and around the small shops that sold the spices, the lentils, the halal meat that made these towns feel like home. The first generation that arrived imagined making some money quickly and, some time in the future, returning home. That future never arrived. Their children and grandchildren have now grown up as Lancastrians and Yorkshiremen-Muslim Lancastrians and Yorkshiremen.

These antiquated mills went out of business in the 1980s. The population—white, brown, and black—had no jobs. The general depression of the mill-and-mosque towns reflected itself in run-down, restless schools, without ambition or excellence. The activists and ambulance chasers of the Left demanded more multiculturalism in these schools—which gave cover to the ex-peasant community's demands for the Islamization of the schools' ethos and curriculum. They demanded—successfully, in some cases—that girls and boys be taught separately, that girl pupils cover their

heads and limbs, that the schools serve halal meat, that Arabic and the Quran be taught, that British history classes depict Britain primarily as an exploitative, demonic nation. Principals who resisted these demands were branded racists.

In 1989 came the most significant divide in the multicultural history of Britain: the Rushdie affair, which uncovered a multicultural fifth column, whose literary criticism entailed book burning and death threats. The British Muslim community echoed the call of the Ayatollah Khomeini to hunt down and kill the writer. There were denunciations of Rushdie in every mosque by mullahs and crowds who had only handled a copy of the book to burn it. Not one mullah—not one—raised a voice in support of the principle of freedom of creativity; no mullah ventured the opinion that the *fatwa* was wrong or against Islamic teaching. Though the supposedly liberal Muslim commentators whom the British press retains were not in favor of the death sentence, none would extend himself to a defense of the book. In Bradford, an ugly book-burning rally was led by one Kalim Siddiqui, who was forced to admit to an investigating press that he and his operation were financed by the government of Iran. He subsequently set up a "Muslim Parliament of Britain," which professed to dispense laws and promulgate rules for the Muslims of Britain.

In the first week of the *fatwa* against Rushdie and his book, I appeared on a television panel. Among the Muslim panelists, all of whom favored condemning the book, were two zealots: the same Kalim Siddiqui; and Yusuf Islam, the Muslim convert pop singer of Greek Cypriot origin formerly known as Cat Stevens. The moderator asked if, in my role as a commissioning editor of Channel 4 UK, I would contemplate turning *The Satanic Verses* into a film. I said that I would judge the cinematic merits of the script, and that no other consideration would rule it out. Kalim Siddiqui and Yusuf Islam snarled, warning that the sentence of death on Rushdie would extend to all those who forwarded his book in any way.

We had all come from London to Manchester to record the "discussion." The producer had a word with me when it was over: would I feel more comfortable if he changed my hotel, away from the threateners and their entourage?

Before the *fatwa* and the Muslim solidarity it generated, the race industry that arrogates to itself the leadership of immigrant opinion had assumed that, with a few concessions, and with some exotic and

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welcome additions to British cuisine, the new immigrant communities would be assimilated into British life with hiccups but not convulsions. The fatwa affair—when the entire Islamic community united behind the condemnation—should have put an end to the idea. This was one bridge that Muslim immigrants were not willing to cross.

In fact, after the Rushdie affair, Muslim spokesmen and their supporters demanded that the law of blasphemy, which still existed in Britain, be extended to apply to Islam. The Muslim clerics would then determine what was blasphemous. Thankfully, nothing came of it. The book burners and novelist killers, recognizing only one book as the fount of truth, cannot countenance a literary tradition, established through centuries of struggle against censorship and obscurantism, that allows the sacred to be prodded critically, even to be profaned. The liberal, democratic freedom to think and speak that the West enjoys has been won in part through this prodding and provocation. That freedom allows people to vilify a writer, to demonstrate their antagonism to his fiction, even to burn a few books. But it does not bestow the freedom to call for the execution of anyone.

The affair of the *Verses* demonstrated that successive generations of Muslim immigrants to Britain, despite their broad Midland accents and their (admittedly rather curtailed) education in the Western intellectual tradition, identified themselves primarily as Muslims. They declared their allegiance not to the traditions that allowed them to settle, to worship, to have the Prince of Wales visit their mosques and proclaim himself their protector, but rather to a religious philosophy that emanates from a different place and different age.

It was in the early eighties that this identity with a freshly militant universal Islam emerged as a politically distinct force in Britain. While the earlier generation of Muslim immigrants had gone their way without bothering to adopt Western dress, their children grew up wearing Air Jordan sneakers, baggy trousers, and Hilfiger tops, in imitation of American blacks. The great cliché of their generation, enshrined in endless articles and now in facile novels, is that they were caught between two cultures. Some of these second- and third-generation Muslim Britons resolved this tension by adopting the politics, philosophy, and culture of fundamentalist Islam. On college campuses, some students began to dress in what they imagined was a fashion

decreed by an Islamic identity. They reformed their lives, their speech, their friendships. They assumed a mission and characterized the evolution of civil liberties—the gains of feminism for instance—as immorality. Their puritan disgust for the West's popular culture and sexual license, their support for laws that decree the stoning to death of adulteresses and the beheading of apostates, became the profession of an allegiance alienated from the Britain that allows them the freedom to assume and argue these positions.

All these new zealots were brought up in a traditional Muslim way by parents whose religious views were generally orthodox but not extremist. But in the 1980s, a new Muslim leadership of mullahs inspired and paid for by various Islamic powers around the world was entering the country and setting up bases in Britain, thanks to an immigration-law loophole that allows religious personnel open-ended permission to stay. Iranian money, Saudi money from worldwide foundations for the promotion of Islam, was establishing mosques and setting up *madrasas*, schools that purvey primitive religious instruction and teach the Quran by rote. Adolescents attracted to this new radical preaching, young people whose childhood religious observances had already set them apart from their British contemporaries, came under the domination of a stricter observance with the allure of an ideology. The new mullahs were offering a single-minded, luminously simple explanation of the cosmos and promising membership in an organization that would dominate the world. "We carry Islam as a political belief, a complete system," says Omar Bakri Muhammad, a poisonous cleric who runs a London Muslim organization. "We don't carry Islam as a religion. It's an ideology."

If you prostrate yourself to an all-powerful and unfathomable being five times a day, if you are constantly told that you live in the world of Satan, if those around you are ignorant of and impervious to literature, art, historical debate, and all that nurtures the values of Western civilization, your mind becomes susceptible to fanaticism. Your mind rots.

Worse, it can become the instrument of others who send you out on suicidal missions. Three years ago, the Yemeni police caught eight young men with plans and equipment to bomb British targets in that country: the offices, homes, and churches of the British diplomatic and expatriate community. Six of these young Muslims, all of Pakistani origin, held British passports. Three were from the Midlands, two

from the North, and one from London, the stepson of a Muslim preacher in the Finsbury Park mosque. The Yemeni courts tried and convicted them of conspiracy to commit terrorism.

Their cover stories were pathetic. They said they had gone to Yemen to learn Arabic: that's like going to Pakistan to learn English. The Foreign Office in London instructed the British diplomats in Yemen to extend their support to these citizens. One can imagine the conversation: "I say, old chap, you didn't really come here to blow me and my children up, did you? Ah well—we'd better see you safely back to old Blighty, hadn't we?"

I set out to write about these adventurers at the time. Their wives or partners—young white women wearing headscarves and ankle-length skirts, like the Albanian peasants who beg on the London Underground—appealed on TV for the British government to secure their release. The men in Yemen denied that their aim was terrorism and begged for their freedom, alleging that the Yemeni police had tortured and sexually assaulted them. They, their lawyers, and their families claimed the protection of the British state; and Britain, accepting an obligation to them as British subjects, made representations on their behalf to the Yemeni government. Where did these young men, British by birth and schooling, develop the hatred that would take them to Islamic guerrilla training camps in Yemen and then on a mission to kill British diplomats and their families?

Journalists traced the roots of their mission back to Finsbury Park in North London, to the mosque situated in a largely Turkish Cypriot area of the city and to a preacher called Abu Hamza, a one-eyed mullah with a claw, like Captain Hook's, for a right hand. I asked him where he had lost his hand. His reply was: "I didn't lose my hand; I gained it."

I persisted, and he claimed that he had been a *mujahid* in Afghanistan and lost his hand in the fighting, though it seemed to me that its amputation was consistent with the premature explosion of a bomb. He boasted to me that he had sent young men to training camps. He would not say what they trained for or where, but his general contention was that, as Muslims, they must fight for the conversion of the world to Islam. The young men in Yemen were part of the worldwide *jihad*. He would not say which one of the professed worldwide campaigns he was part of. He seemed proud that his own stepson was involved in the murdering foray into Yemen and said that, if they had gone to



destabilize the Yemeni government, he would not condemn their enterprise. I pointed out that Yemen was a Muslim country and that these British men and their Algerian co-conspirators were being tried under Islamic law. His contention was that any court that did not support the attack on Western interests in the Middle East was insufficiently Islamic.

The Yemeni incident should have alerted Britain and its government to the rise of a phenomenon that couldn't be explained by any theories of race relations. It didn't. Liberal opinion, while not admitting that the Yemeni six were out to kill Britons, called again for an examination of the British racism that had alienated them.

Then, in the summer of 2001, riots broke out in several of the mill-and-mosque towns. A few hundred masked

ture places in the way of assimilation has produced a generation of disaffected youth, highly susceptible to the incitements of Islamic militants.

The pundits didn't seem to notice that the stone-throwing impulse and the hanky masks were in imitation of TV pictures of Arab youths in their street battles with Israeli police. They failed to engage with the fact that among these rioting Muslims were members of semi-clandestine Islamic fundamentalist quasi-organizations, gathering under the aegis of a mosque or a college society. And though none surfaced publicly in the wake of these riots to claim responsibility, behind them there were preachers like Abu Hamza of Afghanistan and Finsbury Park.

I had a foreshadowing of this connection in conversations I had with some of

laws and sensibilities of men did not matter, and that only the law of the book and the will of God, as interpreted by them, of course, could govern the thinking of the Muslim. After all, "Muslim" means the one who submits.

Established Muslim organizations of Britain, the sort that talk to the Home Office and get invitations to Downing Street, expressed their regret at the atrocity. The Prince of Wales went to prayers at the East End mosque to demonstrate his solidarity with Britain's Muslims. Tony Blair, staunch supporter of President Bush's anti-terrorist initiatives, appeared on TV, flanked by leaders of Muslim organizations. As a group, they condemned the attack and denounced Hamza and Bakri as "clowns."

Despite these denunciations, outside the mosques of Britain, young men of the

## ***As for race relations, Britain has long been acting like Florence Nightingale: selfless, dedicated, bandaging every wound, but ignorant about the genesis and gestation of gangrene.***

"Asian" (which in Britain means Indian, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi) youths took to the streets after dark and began torching shops, pubs, cars, and buses. They fought the riot police with staves and stones. Oldham, Bradford, and Burnley exploded in riots. The pundits and the Home Office officials in charge of race relations were bewildered. Their explanations were classic-clichéd and mistaken. They attributed these "Asian" riots to the "failure of years of race relations," to resentment of poverty and unemployment, and to rumors that neo-fascist anti-immigrant organizations like the British National Party were invading these towns.

The BNP had undoubtedly established a small presence among the white citizens of the mill-and-mosque towns, capitalizing on fears of the unemployed and unemployable "Asian" youths hanging around the streets. As for race relations, Britain has long been acting like Florence Nightingale: selfless, dedicated, bandaging every wound, but ignorant about the genesis and gestation of gangrene. What the newspapers failed to mention was that these weren't "Asian" youths—not Gujeratis, not Hindu Punjabis, not Sikhs. They were Muslims whose parents or grandparents came from Mirpur or Bangladesh. The difficulties Muslim cul-

ture these young Muslims in Oldham before the riots. They wore the fundamentalist uniform—the cap, the beard, the white tunic and trousers. They said that Western civilization deserved to be destroyed.

"So where are you going to start? In your own hometown?" I asked.

Their spokesman smiled. "Everywhere," he said.

The riots had no targets, symbolic or strategic. They didn't seem to protest against unemployment. The riots were swagger and mayhem, and the rioters in successive towns vied to outdo one another. The race-relations lobby's claim that this was an "Asian" protest against maltreatment and racism—and the lobby needs racism to keep it in business—is worse than unhelpful, for it obscures the real problem and the real danger: the antagonism among some British Muslims that condemns all of Western civilization as rotten and immoral.

After the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Hamza was wheeled out again, together with the poisonous Omar Bakri Muhammad, who had been expelled from his native Syria and is funded by missionary money originating in Saudi Arabia. They both said that they supported the *jihad*, that the

jihadi persuasion mount soapboxes with hateful slogans supporting the atrocity, exhorting the arriving or departing worshipers to "join the war" against the wickedness of America and demanding nothing less than its total destruction.

Outside the Regent Street mosque, the largest in London and the one regarded as the central place of worship for all Muslim denominations, groups of these youth, who would not say when challenged whether they were followers of Hamza or of Bakri, distributed leaflets. The leaflets called for the worshipers to defend Islam against the imminent American war and called on the British government to disassociate itself from the American-led aggression against Islam. Uniformed London policemen stood by to ensure their freedom of speech.

And now, even as I write, a young Muslim from Burnley, Lancashire, has been taken prisoner by the Northern Alliance Afghans. He had come to Afghanistan to fight for the Taliban. The deputy prime minister of Britain, John Prescott, rallied to his defense, perhaps, like so many Labour politicians with Muslim constituents, looking for votes. Instead, he should send MI5 and MI6 to investigate where and how this young man was recruited and whether there are



other terrorist cuckoos in this same nest.

The governments of Algeria, Egypt, and Yemen may not be able to root out the fundamentalists in their midst who resort to terror, but Western countries have no option. One can't shelter in one's home those who would kill you. Britain has given extended permission to stay to the likes of Hamza and Bakri. The very liberalism against which they preach has nursed this fifth column. It must be rooted out.

Muslim states, including Libya, have mouthed their support of the U.S. and its people in their hour of bereavement with an ironic brazenness. Some of them, apostles of Islamist terror themselves, do it to avert the judgment and vengeance of an aroused America; others because they have their own local terrorist problem, with which they would welcome assistance. From within the U.S., several voices of the Muslim community have expressed their sorrow, dismay, and outrage.

And yet even when liberal Muslims declare that what was done to the victims of New York, of the Pentagon, and of the four airliners was an atrocity contrary to the tenets and teachings of the Quran, that it was indeed a sinful transgression of Islam that will not lead to paradise but to hell, the majority of Muslims around the world don't believe them, because they have been convinced by the interpretation of the fundamentalist, whom liberal Muslims allowed to remain unchallenged for so long.

Ironically, this terrible act is destined to mark a day of judgment for world Islam. In its 1,400 years, Islam has inspired and incorporated the great mystical movement of the Sufis. It has also suppressed it. It has spawned in its time liberal jurisprudence, great art, scientific endeavor, and the simple idea that what is not forbidden by the Quran is allowed. And yet Islam has, in the twentieth century, funded by oil and inspired by the work of Mohammed Wahab, an eighteenth-century fundamentalist, led its followers back to the book.

Apart from the Muslims of Arabia, all Muslims are converts to Islam. As V. S. Naipaul eloquently argues in his books and essays of travel and discovery (see "Our Universal Civilization," Summer 1991), they date their history from the birth of the prophet. They adopt the history of Islam, the movements and conquests of the desert tribes, as their history, despite being themselves the descendants of the world's most ancient civilizations. Five years ago, Iranian fanatics, the

descendants of Muslim converts from Zoroastrianism, set out to destroy the ruins of the ancient Zoroastrian city of Persepolis. This year, the Taliban of Afghanistan destroyed the world's inheritance of the Bumiyan Buddhas that happened to be on the land that they have usurped. Persepolis ultimately escaped demolition only because members of the Islamic regime saw a commercial opportunity in opening the site to tourism, making some money while preserving their contempt for the site's historical and cultural significance.

The creed that leads these vandals to disown and destroy anything that is deemed "un-Islamic" leads them to a mission to challenge and convert the world, through terror if necessary. They don't for a moment consider that the world doesn't want a religion that suppresses women, adopts a medieval creed of crime and punishment, forces people to prayer at the behest of the police, forbids the writing of novels, the making of films, and the playing of music, and destroys the minds of its young and leads them to fanatical acts of suicidal terror in which they murder upward of 6,000 innocents.

This barbaric interpretation of Islam has inevitably come into moral and now mortal conflict with the West and its dominant state power. As the cowboy movies say, this earth ain't big enough for the both of them. And this fight to the oblitative finish ultimately cannot be a matter of killing people and toppling regimes. It has to involve a revolution within Islamic thinking itself.

What Islam needs is a reformation, and if this very concept is forbidden in the unchangeable word of the Quran, there is enough Islamic history to support a reforming and radical interpretation of the law of living with others. There have been movements in Islamic history that are by no means inimical to peace, tolerance, and even to democratic and liberal principles.

But where is the will today to affirm such a history, to promulgate such a theology, and to found an authoritative reformation of the modern Islamic mission?

The U.S. has in the last three decades countenanced the immigration of millions of Muslims from the Indian subcontinent, from the Middle East, and North Africa. Some of them died in the World Trade Center, where they had a mosque on the seventh floor. The Muslims of America now live in what, with all its imperfections, is a free, advanced, democratic society. Many of them are professionals—doctors, dentists, engineers, software and

hardware experts, scientists, pilots, even members of the armed forces. Their right to the pursuit of happiness will ensure their right to embrace Islam. They must now see that an interpretation of the Quran that belittles all preceding human history and that refuses to be modified by the discoveries of the Enlightenment, of scientific advance and social liberty, cannot coexist with the rest of the modern world.

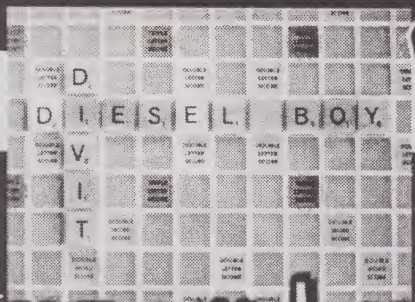
The vast number of Muslims in Britain and the U.S. who are educated in Western disciplines and culture, who live by the demands of Western ways of work, are riven by a conflict between the prescriptions of Islam and the freedom to think, speak, and associate, and to be protected by democracy and Western jurisprudence. These Western Muslims will have to resolve their dilemma by seeding the reformation in Islam.

Western Muslims must now discover in their own history and theology that nothing forbids the rise of a single or collective Martin Luther who will defy the medievalist mullahs (a self-appointed rather than an anointed clergy) and will pin new theses, renouncing world conquest, on the doors of every mosque.

The development of Islam, though constantly hijacked by fundamentalist sects like the Wahabis, has always had a strong, non-proselytizing, mystical Sufi current, to which 80 percent of the world's Muslims have some connection. And Islam has always had in its theological armory the sanctioned concept and tradition of *ijtihad*, which means coming to conclusions about prescription, behavior, and morality through argument and the application of reason rather than through dogma. It is in a sense parallel to the reliance of the Christian Reformation on the supremacy of conscience. True, passages in the Quran urge believers to "kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them" and to wage war on neighboring infidels. But a hundred suras of the Quran also enjoin the faithful to tolerance: one specifically says that killing one innocent person is akin to the murder of the whole world. An Islamic Reformation would delegitimize literal interpretations of Quranic passages stoking intolerance and emphasize those that resemble the Golden Rule.

As for the officials of America and Britain, they need to redirect the effort and money that they have poured into race relations and multiculturalism into a clear, reasoned, energetic defense of the values of freedom and democracy. Their future depends on it. ☪



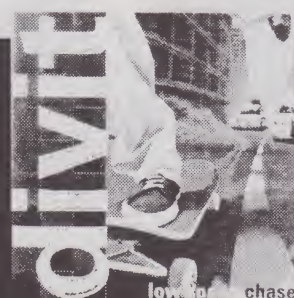


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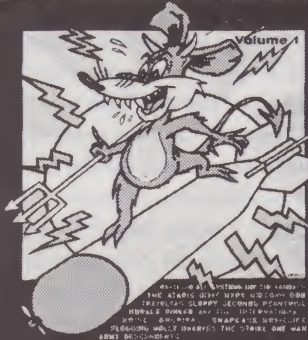


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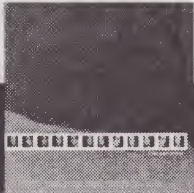


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The Lazy Cowgirls The Lazy Cowgirls



PHOTO BY: Bill McCarter

# The Lazy Cowgirls

## Introduction and interview by Mike Frame

Randy Newman needs to die. Anyone who would write a song called "I Love L.A." should be shot on sight. I hate the place! It's hot and sprawling and fake and miserable. A total shitbox, as far as I am concerned. Yet somehow, lots of my all-time fave bands have come crawling outta that pit. The MUFFS, JEFF DAHL, the ZEROS, the BELL RAYS, the JONESES – the list goes on and on. Somewhere up near the top of that list rests Mr. Pat Todd and his world-class LAZY COWGIRLS. How a man and a band with so much soul, fire, and ass-kickin' high energy rock'n'roll insanity managed to come out of that village of plastic is a mystery to me. It probably has to do with the fact that Pat Todd has roots in the much reviled yet traditionally hot rockin' Midwest region of the USA. From Chuck Berry to the Stooges, from Cheap Trick to the Dead Boys, the Midwest has been a mecca for raw,

heartfelt r'n'r for as long as that type of music has existed. That peculiar combination of coming from a long, rich r'n'r tradition, and possessing the underdog status that comes with being from an uncool locale, somehow results in the production of some great, genuine, badass rock'n'roll! It can't help but happen when you come from somewhere that's REAL, a place where the hopes of becoming a star are virtually nonexistent. Nobody wants to fucking LIVE there though, and with good reason. The cultural void just gets to be too much after awhile, and you gotta get the fuck out or sink into it. Which is exactly what the Lazy Cowgirls did, get the fuck out. They headed to L.A. in the early 80's in order to make a go of it in the big city. Luckily, though, they never lost their roots.

Nowadays, the boys are a well-oiled machine, lighting up stages from coast to

coast with their potent brew of rootsy punkrock'n'roll and nice country-inflected slower tunes. They don't rock as straightforwardly as they used to, but goddamn if they're not all the better for it. The last two records are their best ones yet, and that's really sayin' something! How many bands can you name that are at the top of their game and better than ever almost twenty years on in their careers? You'll have a lot of fingers left over, that's for sure. "Somewhere Down The Line" and "Rank Outsider" are by far the best records the band has ever done. The songs are stronger, the playing is better, and the fire, passion, and soul shine through more than ever. There's more soul here than in a hundred tuff guy "Punkrocknroll"™-tattooed jock bands could ever muster. This is a band that can take an old standard like "Route 66" and make it sound fucking VITAL! So, even though there is a LOT of



history to cover, Pat Todd would rather talk about what's happening with the Cowgirls NOW. If you wanna brush up on the history of the band, there is a ton on info on their website (at [www.lazycowgirls.com](http://www.lazycowgirls.com)) for you to check out. Maybe the reason why a lot of bands just like to rehash the old days is because they haven't put out a decent record in fifteen years. They may get in a few words about the newest shit sandwich they just put out so that it'll sell a few copies, but then they'll go out on the road and play all the "classic hits" so that the old-timers won't cry "sellout." It's great for the pocketbook, but it ain't got no heart and it ain't got no soul. Boring bands playing to bored crowds is exactly what has left us in the shape we're in right now.

Trying to find one band that really MEANS it in a sea of "cool" rockers serving up their dull songs in their hot new outfits, with an extra helping of irony, is getting harder than ever. Nothing will catch you more shit in this day and age than being earnest. Which is exactly what makes the LAZY COWGIRLS so damn great! They got no time for what they're "supposed" to do, they're too busy writing GREAT songs, playing amazing shows, and having FUN doing it. You don't see a bored crowd at a Cowgirls show, and there's a reason for that. Pat and the boys still GET DOWN, and they'll have your ass out there shakin' and shimmyin' in no time. Blazin' through great song after great song, the Cowgirls are F-U-N, and that's probably in shorter supply than anything these days. No wacky hats, no hip lingo, no "concept", no gimmick, no bullshit. How weird to think that fun, passionate, soulful, heartfelt music would be such an anomaly these days. You can draw the line from Chuck Berry to the Stones to the Dolls to the Cowgirls, and that's damn fine company to be in.

This is a band made up of music FANS. That's the key to everything right there. This is a band that are fans of their OWN songs. And what songs they are! Some of the most honest, heartfelt lyrics you're ever gonna wrap your eyes around can be found right here. They all understand songwriting, which is all too rare. That's why they're so good and why they got so much FEEL. You live and die by your SONGS. Originality is out the window, you gotta have what it takes to cut it with song-based music, and the Cowgirls got so much of what it takes that

if you don't have any, they can even lend you some. That's why when you put on one of their records, you can immediately tell that you're really listening to an ALBUM. The songs are sequenced perfectly, and there's a reason why everything is positioned where it is. That right there is gonna be the difference between an OK album and a great one. None of this "we got 75 minutes, so let's use it up" bullshit. There's a reason people still break out "L.A.M.F." and "Raw Power" and "Sticky Fingers" all the time. If more people thought about shit like that, we wouldn't have the glut of uninspired, boring, no-reason-to-exist music we got these days. Then there are those SHIT HOT guitar leads! Every time I listen to 'em, the guitars get me. Michael Leigh is on par with ANY guitar player you wanna name, and is WAY better than 99% of the hacks that are trying to pull it off today. Hot damn, I love a hot lead! They've also got one of the best rhythm sections in music today with Lenny and Bob. A REAL rhythm section, still another thing they've got goin' for themselves that puts 'em above the pack. This band can do no wrong. None of this matters where the LAZY COWGIRLS themselves are concerned, of course. THEY certainly don't care what anyone else is doing, and in my opinion it's in their favor given that there is so much blah, mediocre stuff out there. They shine above the rest like the rare, special find that they are.

**Mike Frame:** Alright, let's just start off at the very beginning. How and when did you first discover rock'n'roll music?

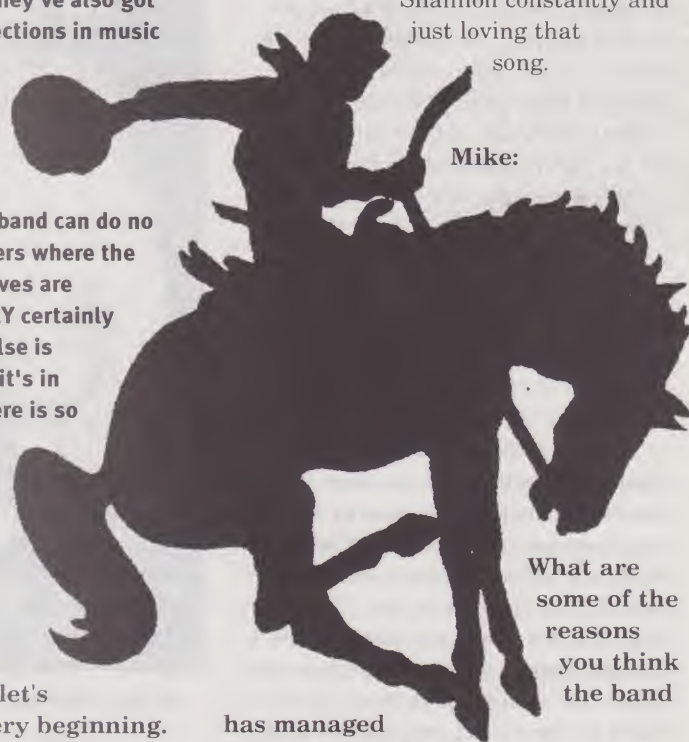
**Pat Todd:** I'll tell you that, without knowing it, my mom is probably a big reason I play music because she always played the radio. AM radio and Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole records, so I always heard music. I was always a big music fan. Of course in those days, the late 50's-early 60's, it was just a mix of everything. My mom actually bought me the single of "Hound Dog" and "Don't Be Cruel." I still have it; it didn't have a

picture sleeve, just the RCA label and the yellow sleeve. We'd sometimes go out for rides on weekend nights. We had a big Cadillac and we'd play the AM radio. I just always loved music, I don't even know why. I liked singing the songs from "Maverick" and "Wyatt Earp" on television when I was a kid.

**Mike:** Of course, radio was so great back then...

**Pat:** Yeah, to me it was. It was so much more of an innocent time. Even into the mid-60's you'd hear "Satisfaction" and Percy Faith, then you'd hear the Yardbirds or the Animals and Frank Sinatra all on the same Hit Parade. I remember going to California when I was a young kid - we took a vacation and I remember hearing "Runaway" by Del

Shannon constantly and just loving that song.



**Mike:**

What are some of the reasons you think the band

has managed to hang around so long?

**Pat:** That's a good question. I guess just a lot of burning desire (laughs). I don't know how else to say it. I just love doin' it, it's in my blood, it's my calling. Whether I'm any good or not is not the point, I always say that. It's just the thing for me to do. I just have that kind of spirit, I guess, I've never thought of stopping. I'll play until the day I die, for me it's like why would you stop breathing? I would just sit here and write



songs in the living room if nothing else. I love performing, I love writing songs, I love being in a van driving across the United States. I think too that something gets in your blood...to me it's just a really romantic idea that you go around and play your music and you get to travel across the country and the world. It's just like anything, there are disappointments and the going gets tough here and there, but that's just part of life I think.

**Mike:** It seems like there is a good solid core of really sincere, great, and genuine bands from LA. Does it seem to you like it's hard to be from that city if you're not working some kind of angle?

**Pat:** When it comes to things like this, it's so not a part of my life or part of my existence that I really don't have an answer for you. We just do what we love to do, and what anyone else is doing or what anyone else is doing is really peripheral. Of course you'd love for the whole world to like you and sell a trillion records and make a million dollars and all that. I think that everybody in music, even if they say they don't want it at all, they wanna be popular. Love and acceptance, that's part of being a human being, even when you're rebelling against it. We don't really feel part of any scene here in town, and in fact I know we're not. That said though, the greatest thing I've ever done probably was to move to Los Angeles. When I moved here it was really a kick in the pants and it really brought out the best in me. This is the kind of town where you almost have to compete just to get to the grocery store. There are so many people and there's so much going on that you have to really try, and to stand out in any way you have to really do your best and work hard. Even so, I think I've been at the point for a long time where it wouldn't matter if I was living in Podunk, I would still be motivated and doing the same things. I know who I am and I know what my ideas and my vision are and all that. So I could probably do this anywhere in the world now. The environment has a little bit to do with how you think and feel, but once you know who you are, it doesn't have that big of an effect. Just like

everyone else in the world, we're all guilty of thinking we know everything. When I came out here I soon realized in that first year that I didn't know anything compared to what I thought I did. I didn't know about life or the world or anything. That was an eye opening thing, I remember, one of those epiphany moments as they say. I came from a town of 20,000 to the largest metropolitan area in the world, so that's quite a change.

**Mike:** It seems like the current line up has been very productive as far as releasing records. What are some



of the reasons behind that?

**Pat:** I think basically the reasons are that we're really attuned to each other and we're really a band, we're all really friends. Michael and Len and myself all have pretty much the same likes and dislikes. By that I mean music, films, books...we've turned each other on to a lot of things over the years. We have a lot of the same sensibilities, and we all really wanna do it. Everybody wants to do this, really loves doing it, and it's what they wanna do. We've got a lot of drive and our own direction and ambition

and we wanna get stuff done. Everyone in the band has input, everyone is really creative, everyone has ideas, and we all share the material. Also, we really love music and playing music, we love talkin' about it, the whole thing. I love a lot of bands, but I know I'm not them. I don't wanna write like them, and I don't wanna try and use their language. You look at anyone who's great, fill in the blank with whoever you'd like, those people are good because they're themselves and they have their own ideas, they're individuals. You use those people as an inspiration to do something on your own. To find whatever is in you — What are my songs? What are my

**“I think that everybody in music, even if they say they don't want it at all, they wanna be popular.”**

lyrics? What are my ideas? Where's my fire — most people don't do that. They try to write Stooges songs with Stooges ideas, or they try to write country songs with country ideas, or whatever. That might make for some good music sometimes — this is all arguable — but most people don't really write for themselves, they write from their influences too much. I don't think what we do is really groundbreaking or anything, but it's sincere, and to me that's pretty groundbreaking. I think it has always been, I think that's what makes you like anybody or anything. You could talk about how so and so was the first to blow a sax a certain way or the first to use feedback, but I don't think any of those things amount to a hill of beans if they don't speak to your heart somehow.

**Mike:** It seems like some of the lyrics



on the last coupla records have been somewhat nostalgic, have you been in more of a "looking back" frame of mind recently?

**Pat:** I don't know if it's exactly looking back...like the song says, "I ain't looking back no more." I think maybe it's more where you come to some point and you start just looking at everything, your life or whatever, but it's not like some big conscious thing. I think I just reached a point where I was taking stock of a lot of things.

**Mike:** I was thinking particularly  
**"...look back at bands that are your all time favorites, the Stones and the Ramones are two prime examples, or even Johnny Thunders, and the worst thing about those bands is that they just kept on doing the same old song over and over..."**

about a song like "You've Got Religion Now" which I can really relate to and would imagine a lot of other folks can as well...

**Pat:** That was literally about a friend of mine...I used to announce that song as being about the kind of guy who would always say and do all the things you wished you could say and do. Then of course things change, the guy just went off the deep end within a year or so. I've asked about him over the years, and they say he's still the same. He won't let his kids go out for Halloween cause that's a Pagan holiday, that's how weird it is. That was just something that had been around for a while and then, as they say, finally came to fruition. I'm sure you're thinking about a song like "Back Down In The Basement" too,

which may be looking back a little bit, but it's not nostalgic or anything like that. It's more like taking stock and saying "I wanna live now, what was before doesn't matter anymore." It's important to move on. I think that's one of the reasons our band has stayed good, because I still am really inspired and I'm worried about now. I don't care about 10 years ago or any of that. So it's really not nostalgic as much as trying to learn not to make the same mistakes all over. It's time to move, it's time to do something now.

**Mike:** Well I'll tell you honestly, the



last two records are by far my favorite Lazy Cowgirls records. Those are the ones I definitely find myself pulling out the most often...

**Pat:** Well, thank you. They ARE the best ones. It's like I KNOW they are. And the live album is right in there, it makes sense too, it's in the same lineage or whatever you wanna call it. You look back at bands that are your all time favorites, the Stones and the Ramones are two prime examples, or even Johnny Thunders, and the worst thing about those bands is that they just kept on

doing the same old song over and over and they didn't really try and work on their new songs. They let their crowd dictate what they were gonna do. More power to 'em, but I decided long ago that I'm only gonna do what I wanna do. If you lose fans, you do. It's just like with life, those people who were your best friends when you were 5 or 10 years old are not probably still your best friends. You're not doing the same thing you were when you were 15 or 16, you have to keep going, you have to stay interested in what you're doing in your life.

**Mike:** What were some of the reasons behind reworking "Goddamn Bottle" into the new style?

**Pat:** Just literally that I thought it would be a good way of doing it. It just popped into my head that we should try it that way. I had this idea that it would work, and really it's better. A lot of people think they won't like it and then they hear it and they're surprised. I think everything about the song is better, the feeling, the lyrics work better, the melody comes out better. We're getting a lot of compliments on the songs we've redone. On the live record we re-did "Rock of Gibraltar," and I just wrote all new lyrics. We hadn't played that song since 1988, so we decided to do it and I found I didn't like the lyrics anymore so I wrote all new ones. Except for the chorus, which still works with that. We also re-did "Your Charmed Life is Fading Fast" off of "A Little Sex and Death," with just acoustic guitars. Then we did "Somewhere Down the Line" with me on an acoustic and Michael on electric, playing bottleneck. It came out real good.

I love the other version and I think this one is as good. It's just one of those things, you have ideas and you do them. We're literally busting with ideas! One of the reasons this live album came about is 'cause we had so much stuff. In fact we have MORE stuff. I'm looking to do two or three singles if we can work out the deals with people. We've got so much stuff...sometimes you'll just find with records and songs, because of when they're written or when they're finally worked out, that there's no place for 'em on that record. But you want 'em out because they're good, so you find another



place for 'em. We're also gonna try and have an album out by the end of the year. I think there are some very important things, the sequencing of an album, the songs you use...truthfully, when I know the album is done I don't bring in any more songs. Unless one ends up not working out, then I look for one that will be a good fit. I do that...when we play live we do a set on purpose. We do the songs in the order we do 'em on purpose. It's not an accident...you do 'em for emotional content, the flow of the set, how you wanna present yourself, that's the reason we do those things.

**Mike: It seems like, especially with the rise of the CD, people are just like "we've got 75 minutes, let's fill it up"...**

**Pat:** I agree and I think especially with a punk style of music, if you do 60 or 70 minutes or even 50 minutes and you don't have change-of-pace songs and you don't have background vocals and you don't have melodies, that is ridiculous. Most people do not have enough songwriting chops to pull that off. I think 35-40 minutes is just about perfect for rock'n'roll. Certainly, with everything you say about anything, there's an exception. But in general I think that works best. I think too that what has made these last two records great, among a million things, is the sequencing and the change-of-pace numbers. But you know, it's not like you really do things like that on purpose either. You just grow and you realize how you really wanna be, and how you really Are, and how you really feel. I meet bands that are good people, and their whole thing is they come off like this hardass punk guy. The truth is that they're nothing like that at all, they're clerks or they work at a gas station or they work at a flower shop or they drive or whatever, and that they're not hardasses, they're just decent, regular people. I think what's wrong with bands and songwriting is that with most people, their whole thing is copying other people. We'll always say, "I wonder when Joe Blow is gonna write HIS song," when will he write his own song instead of an Iggy song or a Dolls song or whatever? I think that's one thing that's missing from people, and and you have to work

hard to do that. To find out who you are or to just try to find out who you are, 'cause it's hard enough to find out who you are anyway. I think that's something that most people don't wanna work hard enough to do. You talk about anyone you like – writers, bands, filmmakers – anybody, each of these persons is completely different from one another. They don't sound the same, they have their own artistic vision or idea and aesthetic of how they want to be. They don't try to be whoever they love. They just try to be inspired by them – you get your roots from the things you love. Chuck Berry doesn't sound like Little Richard, Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters



don't sound alike. The Ramones and the New York Dolls and the Stooges, none of those people sound the same. I think that's a key thing, you have to try and find out who YOU are. Identity is a really important thing. You've gotta find out who in the hell you are, and then you can reach your true potential. The people I have loved in everything, I have come to realize over the years that these people were really individuals. They didn't copy each other, and when they were at their best and when they were inspired, they had almost a whole worldview. That inspired me to find out

what mine was. You have a lot to live up to if you care about stuff like that.

**Mike: Is there anything that you haven't accomplished yet that you'd like to?**

**Pat:** That's a hard question to answer. Of course I haven't accomplished nearly everything that I want to, and I wanna keep getting better and do more. Of course you'd love to be successful, you'd love to make a living off of it. That's not why you play music, but it would be great if you could. For me I just wanna know that I'm doing something that's really good and really important to me. I think that as long as you feel like that, you're probably never satisfied in some ways. You feel like there's always more to accomplish. I feel like we can write even better material, keep getting better with age, and I just feel like there's more to do all the time. +

#### LAZY COWGIRLS LP DISCOGRAPHY:

"Here and Now" (live) (2001) Sympathy  
 "Somewhere Down The Line" (2000) Sympathy  
 "Rank Outsider" (2000) Sympathy  
 "A Little Sex and Death" (1997) Crypt  
 "Ragged Soul" (1995) Crypt  
 "How It Looks, How It Is" (1990) Sympathy  
 "Radio Cowgirl" (1988) Sympathy  
 "Third Times The Charm, Again" (1988) Dog Meat  
 "Tapping The Source" (1987) Bomp!  
 "The Lazy Cowgirls" (1985) Restless

**Please contact the band at:**

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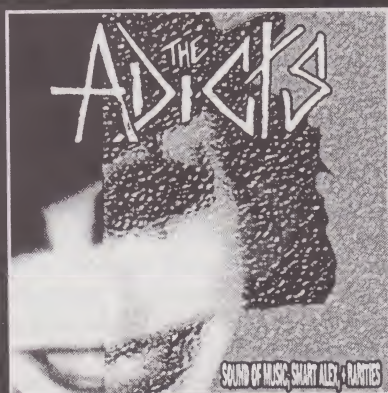


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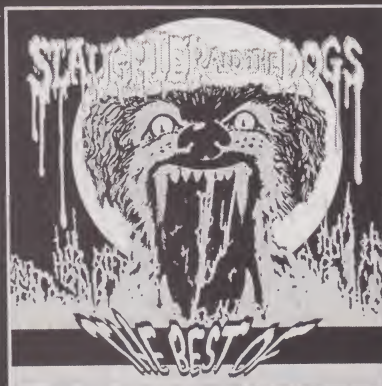
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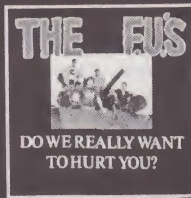
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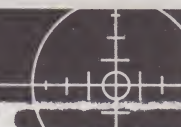
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**T**his is the last column I'll ever write here in HOSTILE CITY, USA. In a little over a week, my wife and kid and I are moving to lovely SAN MARCOS, TEXAS, a town nestled mid-way between nearby Austin and San Antonio.

Philly has been the best place I've lived to date. Seattle, Portland, and Hollywood all had their charms — and drawbacks too. We were drawn here by Philly's great wrestling promotion (ECW, which of course is now gone)

Thinkin' & Drinkin' w/ The Whiskey Rebel



and the good-damned healthy negative attitudes of the local citizenry. From the scowling old ladies sitting on their

stoops spitting to gradeschool kids playing smashmouth street hock-

ey, from the Italian district to the Irish/Polish belt we live in, from the bombed out, uninhabited (except for herds of "Dawn of the Dead"-type crackheads) ruins of the "red zone" in North Philly to Kensington, an inner city white trash ghetto (immortalized by my pal Jim Goad in his *Redneck Manifesto*), and to the center city streets that are packed with all sorts, ranging from mentally deranged freaks, the world's most aggressive panhandlers, and 80-year old rich bitch widows from snotty Rittenhouse Square out walking their poodles, I've been sickened by this city at times. But I've never been bored.

I am SO FUCKING THANKFUL that I didn't listen to the misinformed rubes in Portland who tried to talk us out of moving here. It's been a great 7 and 1/2 years. We've recorded about five or so full-length CDs here, I've written one published novel and have two more that are in the editing stage, not to mention about 500 pages of columns and internet diary entries at <http://home.conectiv.net/~whskyreb/diary.html>

Oddly enough, for the first and only time in my life I've been received as an "optimistic," "cheery," "happy drunk"-type when compared to the bitter, pessimistic souls who were born here. This has led to me chalking up only a very few enemies to leave behind. The music scene here stinks right now. But I'm glad to say that the people who come out to see bands here — WHEN there's something happening worth seeing — are my kind of people. They come prepared to have a GOOD TIME rather than standing in the back of the room with their arms smugly folded, like I've seen so often in Seattle, Portland, and L.A.

Philly is the only city I've ever been proud to live in. But it's time to move on. To TEXAS. It's about time Texas had a couple of C.O.S. bands to rally round, EH? (if you live in the Austin, San Antonio or San Marcos areas and feel you're man (or gal) enough to join either of our bands, RANCID VAT or ALCOHOLICS

UNANIMOUS, you'd best get in touch and file an application...pronto). Naturally, everybody asks us why we're moving, and by now I'm sick of answering the question.

I'm fascinated, though, by the unanimous terrified reactions that both Marla and Elvis are getting from their work/school associates. Elvis reported to me (remember, he's a high school Junior, not a toddler) that his fellow students, one after another, expressed SHOCK that he would willingly move to such a "violent" place. "They have GUNS there," said some. "They execute people there," said others. Then there is my favorite: "A kid in Texas was ran over by a car just because he was a punk rocker!!"

I'm sure three things have never occurred to many of these bright students. A) Why are they so afraid of people legally registering and owning guns? Why do they feel safer in Philly, where gun laws idiotically forbid otherwise law-abiding citizens from protecting themselves with firearms?? Are these naive scholars not aware of the fact that Philly is one of the most violent fucking cities in the world? It's damned hard to foresee how even the worst neighborhoods of Houston or El Paso could be any more dangerous than Philly's "red zone," which is an area well over a mile square in North Philly that the cops don't even try to patrol.

B) Why do they execute people there? I can understand someone taking exception to the death penalty; but WHY WHY WHY is a state any less livable because a small number of felons are put to death instead of incarcerated?? Are they afraid Elvis might go on a killing spree and wind up in prison and be put to death??

C) Here in Hostile City people would also probably run punk rockers over with cars...if more people owned them. Most people ride the bus or the El here (tee hee). Seriously, I remember the night a punk rocker I worked with at Tower Records got his head caved in BAD by a friendly bunch of rap enthusiasts from the "projects" down the street. Why? Because they didn't like the way he looked. For Christ's fucking sake, lots of punk rockers brag about being targets of abuse. It goes with the territory. If you wear cowboy boots and a fucking John B. Stetson hat in a neighborhood where that's considered goofy apparel, you're just as vulnerable. For that matter, I can remember instances spanning the last 20+ years in which I saw "normal"-looking suspected squares get attacked in punk rock clubs.

It's also an international phenomenon. Even in the most supposedly docile U.N.-supporting countries on earth, if you look different in the wrong place or at the wrong time, you may well get slapped down by local yocals. OR maybe dragged behind a pickup truck. OR WORSE.

To top it all off, Elvis isn't a "punk rocker". He listens to a wide range of different stuff, ranging from Motörhead to the Ramones to Hank Williams to Nervous Norvows to the Rolling Stones. Why would anyone fear living in a state populated by millions of people just because one kid was run over by a car? What about the legendary 3-way dance brawl between large numbers of punk rockers, skinheads, and locals in Philly's Kensington district back in the mid 80's? (I believe it was at a DK's/Black Flag gig).

I thought the reactions of Elvis's friends were due to their being impressionable teenagers. Until Marla told me she was hearing the same hokum about "guns...death penalty...BLAH BLAH... blah... GUNS.. death penalty...GGGUUUUU-



UNNNSSSSSSSS!!" "They SHOOT people down there, you know," advised one of her middle-aged co-workers. WHO THE FUCK are "they"? And exactly WHO do they shoot?

I'm envious of my gun owning friends. You see, I'm not allowed to buy a gun. No, I've never been convicted of any crime. It's my WIFE who refuses to allow the poor ol' Reb to have one. I go to gun shows and admire them and handle other folks' weapons, but my Wife says I'm too much of a hothead to have one. It used to bother me to hear her say stuff like that, but now I guess she has a point. When I see another disgruntled worker spree killing reported on the TV news, I'm never amazed or shocked. I nod along sympathetically, wondering why nobody from the media ever admits what it's like for the millions of workers in the American workplace who have to work alongside groups of assholes they hate. I've worked at several jobs, from offices to warehouses, where innocent workers are constantly harrassed and badgered by big-mouths who just can't shut the fuck up. If I'd owned a gun throughout my quarter century of miserable jobs, would I have used it by now? We'll never know, I guess. I sure felt like it a few goddamned times.

My mind has been troubled lately over the fact that I can't seem to rid it of a particular bunch of annoying co-workers I worked with here in Philly a few years ago. Maybe writing here about them will help me find "closure" (god, I HATE that word!). I devoted many pages to these dickheads in my book *Jobjumper*, but even as I prepare for a fresh start in a new town I still find myself pissed off when I think of them. I can laugh at almost any batch of co-workers I've dealt with over the years, but at this job they REALLY GOT TO ME. I worked in close quarters in a small office area with a gaggle of bitching, pouting, insulting, red-nosed lazy old cunts, average age 60, who HATED MY GUTS. Now, as you might expect (or might not, in which case fuck you), I'm ordinarily a very polite man when it comes to dealing with old broads around my mother's age. I don't fart freely around them or belch or cuss; I always speak softly and use simple words they can understand. I take time out of my busy day to charm them by talking about the weather. I've gotten along with mature women at many jobs over the years. Not at this fucking hell-hole, though!

These crabby old cunts would snipe and scowl at me, making little cutting remarks that the rest would chime in with. If I wore a shirt they had never seen, it'd set 'em off. "YO YO YO, a new shirt...I'm SSSoooo impressed," one would sneer; "I'm SSSoooo impressed," another would echo like a scratchy-throated mangy old parrot. "YO YO, Cheesesteak (my nickname, which I kinda like in retrospect, even though it was meant to put me down) has a new shirt!" They'd giggle and smirk, winking to one another for a half hour over the silliest fucking little thing. I JUST WANTED TO BE LEFT ALONE with my hangover, my work, and my thoughts, but it was IMPOSSIBLE to shut these jabbering old grannies up. There were too many of 'em to argue with, and since they were wrinkled-up old seniors I couldn't physically retaliate. They clung to my every movement in that office like human scabies. Actually, that insults scabies, which are a bright species

## WHISKEYREBEL

*I go to gun shows  
and admire them and  
handle other folks'  
weapons, but my Wife  
says I'm too much of a  
hothead to have one.*

compared to these sing-song Edith Bunker soundalikes. If I shaved, I'd hear "Cheesesteak's going to a job interview...good luck, Cheesey!" "He's SSSsoooo handsome," another would chime in sarcastically. They'd keep at it, keep yakking about the fact that I had shaved (or was drinking tea instead of coffee, or perhaps that I had worn a different coat to work) for 30/60 or 120 minutes or more. On the other hand, if I neglected to shave for a few months I'd hear about it too.

If I took my glasses off for 20 minutes at my desk, it would start them up. If I called my wife from my desk phone, they'd listen to what I said and start after me. If I read a book anywhere in the building during lunch, they'd accuse me of thinking I was "too good" for everybody else. Eventually I wound up reading out in the rain and snow and heat of summer, standing up under an awning. If I worked super fast and efficiently, three or four of them would say "Slow the hell DOWN or we're ALL gonna be expected to do more". They'd get seriously PISSED.

They really MEANT IT! "YOU AREN'T SO GREAT," they'd say, livid with rage. When I saw how mad they got when I worked fast, I went into high gear from that day forward. Happily, the company began laying the old bitches off one by one for lack of work! Everybody would cry when some sour-faced old hosebag was let go on a Friday afternoon. Not ME!! I'd walk around smug-like, working faster than ever.

These old gals were flat out DUMB, and were both loud and proud about it. None of them would be caught dead reading a book or improving their minds in any way. To do so would provoke criticisms of being "uppity" in their circle. They didn't have computers at home and they never traveled anywhere, ESPECIALLY to New York city. When I first went to work at the office, I once made the mistake of asking a group of them if they could give me directions to the turnpike to NYC. They laughed and laughed at the idea of going there. "Whaddya wanna go there for, Cheesey? Don't you like cheesesteaks here anymore?" "Wadda they have there that you can't ged here?" It's disgusting when people of any age are proud of their goddamned ignorance. I don't like people who make a big deal crowing about how educated they are, but those who are proud of being dumb are just as fucked up in my book. They'd loudly run their husbands down, making fun of their habits, their weaknesses, their lack of success. Sometimes it seemed almost like they were competing to be the harshest, most cutting bitch when talking about their men. It was sickening, but then again their hubbies were probably at their jobs ranking on their old cunt womenfolk to their pals.

All of them were lifelong Catholics who let the church do their thinking for 'em. One day I heard a few of them talking about an old guy they knew who worked on another floor. He had keeled over and died from a stroke..and his funeral was to be held a couple blocks away. One old gal sighed, "Well, it's a shame, but it's not like we were close; I'll have to go to the funeral to get a funer-



# HIT SQUAD

al card. Do you think they'll let us take an extra lunch hour so we're can still eat?" "They frickin' better! I'm not giving up MY lunch! If I hafta go get a card and I don't get an hour ta eat, I'm gonna be PISSED," chirped another. They continued discussing the various angles of the funeral for a long time without any of them ever expressing an ounce of remorse over their fallen comrade. I couldn't understand why in the hell they needed to go to get a "card" if they didn't really like the guy.

It wasn't just ME that they'd snipe and bitch at; there were a few others, mostly males, who got the same treatment I did. They'd razz me until I'd eventually snap! "IT'S NONE OF YOUR FUCKING BUSINESS," I'd scream, or perhaps "I WIPE MY ASS WITH BIBLE PAGES!" Then they'd give me the "silent" treatment for a few weeks (as if that weren't actually a goddamn blessing!).

Why didn't I complain to management?? Because my boss was an even MORE OBNOXIOUS asshole! And HE WAS IN CHARGE! And because in that office, there was a "code" that you didn't dare go over your boss' head. Even bosses who outranked my boss believed it was wrong for anybody to come to them directly. I complained lightly to my boss about the annoying old hags, but he just shrugged it all off. I worked in that situation for a few years. My heart began beating so fast from anxiety while I was simply sitting at my desk that I could count 110-115 beats per minute. I developed a strange fear of keeling over, surrounded by all these jeering old fishfaces. I HAD to get the hell out of that job.

As readers of my book *Jobjumper* know, even though I never settled the score with those prune-faced old cunts, I sort of got the last laugh on my fathead supervisor on my way out of that job. Specifically, I faxed a detailed letter to several bosses who outranked the buttface, citing multiple instances of sexist, homophobic, threatening and unstable behavior on his part. I gave specific dates and the names of witnesses who management could question. To be on the safe side, I mailed a duplicate to every one of them, including the (female) Human Resources corporate manager. Out of a quarter century of experiencing BAD bosses, this guy was the second worst. He played creepy mindgames with everybody that were aimed at publicly humiliating them. He referred out loud to a lady that worked in another department as a "slut," and when an offended employee called him on it, he repeated it louder three times! Pounding his fist on his desk, he yelled "SLUT! SLUT! SLUT!" There was another guy, a heart patient, who this boss deliberately assigned harsh physical non-office related tasks to, in an attempt to cause the guy to have a heart attack. How do I know this? He crowed about it to the rest of us behind his back. He'd laugh with tears rolling down his cheeks as the guy trudged back to his desk slowly, wheezing and sweating. I quit my job when it appeared he was about to target ME for the first time in the near future. When I blew the whistle on him, he was demoted and banned from any

supervisory position. YAY! As for me, I didn't stick around to deal with the aftermath of my expose letter. I quit and took a loser job designed for 18 year olds at Tower Records.

In spite of my advanced age, I got along OK at Tower for a couple of years, having being promoted to supervisor after three months. I quit that job too, and have since been self-employed, scrambling for a buck here or there and selling shit on Ebay and at record shows. My REAL purpose in life, as I see it, is to write a few more books and drink another ocean of beer before I drop dead. I've finished off two more. And since I've had a rest from the workplace and am moving to a fresh city where I can reinvent myself, I've actually given some thought to taking another job. Therein lies the problem. I'd gladly take a job working alone, or with one or two people I can deal with. But I STILL haven't gotten over the abusive grandmas at the office job that almost killed me.

Ironically, one of the most oft-repeated catch-phrases the old broads would hiss was "GET OVER IT!" That phrase was their universal snotty putdown directed towards me or any other employee in that hellish office situation who they were "targeting." The geriatric old bitches would gripe and kvetch all day long about some petty corporate policy change, but if they heard me or another employee whom they hated express anger or irritation toward something in our office, they'd rear back and belch their sarcastic cliché, "GET OVER IT!" Accusing the upset employee of being a pussy was meant to be a verbal slamdunk. I hated those old bitches. AND I FUCKING HATE THEM STILL. I should do some investigative work. I'll bet that many of them must be retired, dead, or

in nursing homes by now. I really should find out. Instead, I keep procrastinating and allowing my mind to be fucked up with worry that if I find another job, I'm going to wind up in another pathetic situation surrounded by brainless assholes who can't be reasoned with. No, I'm not going to "get over it".

Maybe if my wife allowed me to own a gun, I'd be rotting away in a jail cell after having settled matters with those despicable witches. Y'know what? I'd probably be rotting away with a smile on my face. No, I wouldn't have spared them because they were old and feeble. Their refusal to shut their flapping mouths made them fair game. I'd enjoy the sight of their tiny brains being blown out of the back of their old grey heads as much as if they were young and strong. They almost finished me off, and I have no mercy whatsoever for them. Come to think of it, maybe it's a good thing for society that my wife won't let me buy a gun. I'm going to remember those sadsack fucking subhuman broads until I DIE. But instead of letting it KEEP me down, I'll channel my hatred into writing more books and songs.

If you look at the very first Rancid Vat album liner notes, you'll see our motto: "Inspired by enemies." Is it any wonder that our band is still going after 20 years? I guess most people in short-lived bands are able to "get over it." NOT ME! ✚

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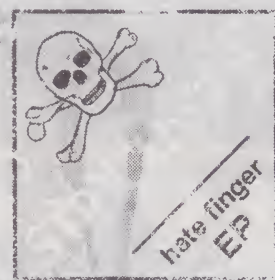
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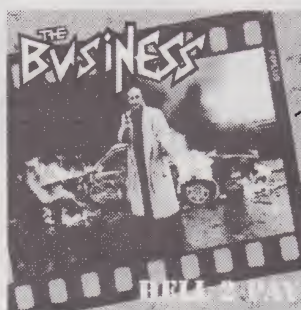
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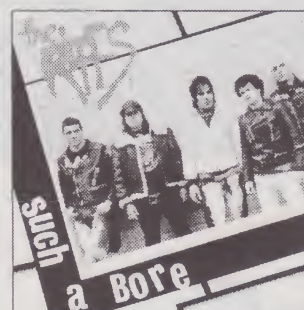
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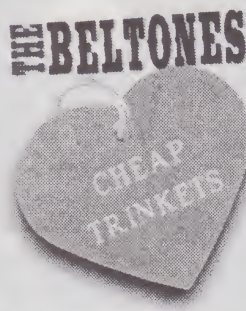


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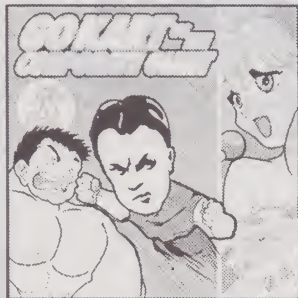


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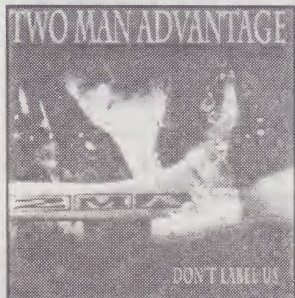


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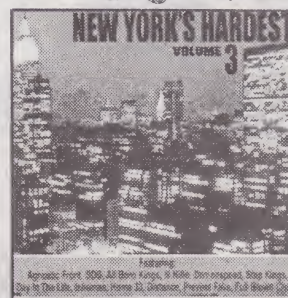
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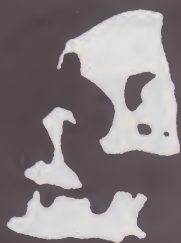


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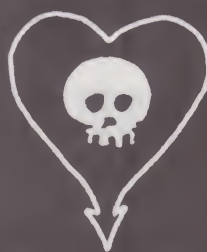
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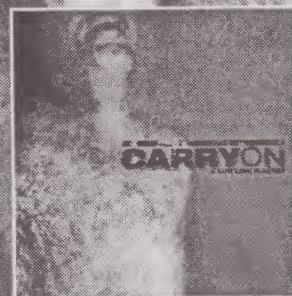


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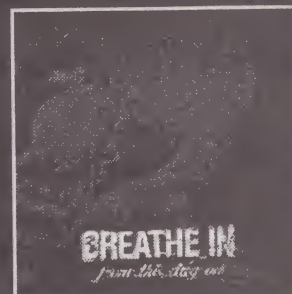
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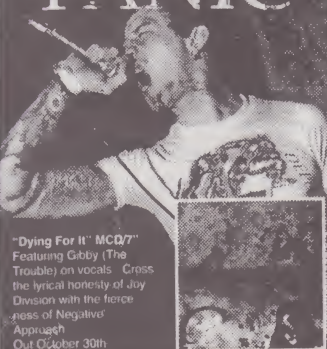
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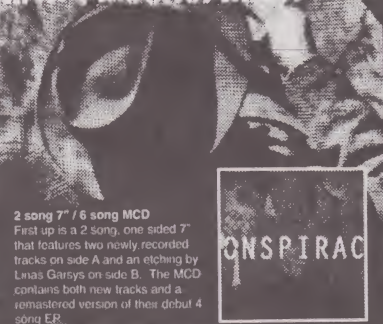
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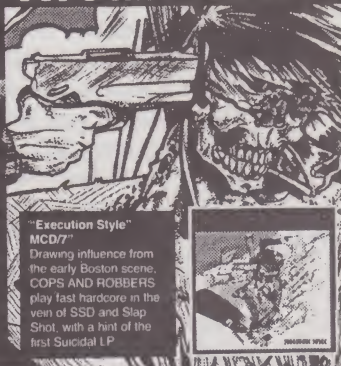
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# HIT SQUAD

## 2001 IN MUSIC, A LOOK BACK

**PART ONE: THE UNDERGROUND SLOWLY NURSING ITSELF BACK TO HEALTH, THE BULLSHIT "DEATH OF IRONY," NO THANKS FOR THE STROKES, AND THE YEAR THE 1978-1991 ("AFTER PUNK") UNDERGROUND MUSIC EXPLOSIONS FINALLY GOT SOME WIDER RECOGNITION**

**F**or the second straight year, I have much less to say about the underground than I did in the early 1990s. But once again I have one big point to make about the recent remarks of some rock critics concerning its immediate future. In last year's essay, I took great exception to the then-prevailing wisdom about how, as I paraphrased, "The indie scene grew complacent under eight years of Democratic rule, and now that Bush has been handed the job by the Supreme Court of Republican appointees,

challenger, and could thus hardly claim any mandate whatsoever for widespread conservative change. Yet not a peep was heard from any musicians, as was so smugly assumed by the usual music pundits who had assured us that this musical dissent was as inevitable as it was welcome!

I find even greater reason to rehash this because the events of September have led to yet *another* round of such utter idiocy (without anyone admitting they were wrong about last year's round). The latest unchallenged conventional wisdom is how the World Trade Center disasters will lead to no less than the "death of irony." What?!?! We were accordingly assured that musicians would return to composing songs related to social and political issues, instead of the commonplace escapist, self-referential, tits-'n'-pecs shaking of the MTV TRL age. Right! Sure thing! Once again, some influential mystical critic weighs in, like an Olympian god, and every other writer nods his or her head in silent respect and repeats it. "Why of course, it must be so! Irony is dead! Sulking pampered pop stars singing about their sexual prowess are passé! Real content is on the way!" Yet no one stops to think how that might actually manifest itself.

What makes anyone think that the musicians in question, if critically charged with the crime of irony-peddling and nonsense pandering, will suddenly all metamorphose into great social poets? (That's what I call laughable!) Having previously shown no interest, let alone aptitude, in writing about global topical and social issues of real public significance, these same songwriters are all now going to turn into Bob Dylan or Phil Ochs overnight?

C'mon now, let's face it, most people can't write about a pressing social issue with any great clarity, passion, or soul, even if they have some expressive lyrical talent, unless it is something that is happening directly to them, or around them, or to someone close to them. For example, it was less difficult to write an anti-war song in the 1960s when you were personally afraid of being drafted, your friends and family were being drafted, or worse, folks you knew went to Vietnam and didn't come back, then it was during the equally dubious Gulf War. Fair enough. Something like Vietnam is an issue that's easy to understand on a gut emotional level. (And never is it easier to write an anti-war song than when your country starts losing the war!) It is things like that, not whether or not the president is a liberal or a conservative or whether a complicated national tragedy occurs, that inspire great progressive music movements to speak with raised, disquieted voices. (Another example: songs like "A Change is Gonna Come," inspired by the Civil Rights movement, were produced by authors who were personally suffering.)

But what songwriter, even if inspired by the aftermath of such a crushing disaster, really knows what to impart about the current national and global issues? For instance, here we are at war, that traditional catalyst for songs of protest or concern, and yet there has been little general enthusiasm over the few demonstrations of anti-war sentiment and for good reason. Despite the extent of our own government's complicity in past dealings with some of the extremists we are now fighting, few Americans think that this war against the Taliban and al Qaida is unjustified. Clearly, even the historically and politically astute do not see this war as a prototypical act of American imperialism, or simply as the protection of business interests under the guise of moral military necessity. Even most people who opposed Vietnam and



protest music will suddenly be revived and indie rock and pop will be recharged! That's one of those statements that sounds good and sensible when one hears it, but collapses instantly when the slightest knowledge of history is even remotely applied!!!"

I noted further that most of the eras identified with indelible protest music coincided with *Democratic* administrations, in particular, 1963-1969 (Johnson), and the 1977-1981 punk explosion (Carter). I could even have mentioned famous folkies such as Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly, who were so active during the two decades of Roosevelt and Truman's Democratic administrations (1933-1953). Thus, in January 2001, I flatly predicted there would be *no* sea change of any kind in underground music or mainstream rock inspired by Bush's Supreme Court coup or any of his administration's subsequent policies.

Now, looking back a year later, I think I was dead on the money in that declaration, especially in the more-normal first three quarters of the year (pre-September 11). There was *zero* evidence of *any* reaction from the music scene, mainstream or underground. Or if there was, it sure didn't come to my attention.

Not that there wasn't ample opportunity for dissent by any left-leaning or otherwise progressive lyricists, as so earnestly projected. Before the terrorists struck three months ago, it was perfectly clear that Bush and Ashcroft and others were pursuing a much more conservative agenda than had initially been anticipated, given that he'd lost in the popular vote to his Democratic



the Gulf War believe that this war is sad but obligatory.

So not surprisingly, I have not heard a single song as yet addressing our nation's foreign policy or military activity—except for the exact opposite, those expressing the usual candy-coated, bland, and blind support for our country and/or our troops. OK, sure, it's only been three months, but it took less time than that for Bruce Springsteen to debut a song about New York police brutality after a nasty, highly controversial shooting. So it can't be time that is the issue.

In fact, the opposite has happened. Three months after the "Irony is dead" claptrap, instead of songs with realism, substance, and reflection, the only topical music we've *actually* seen are moldy stuff like ceaseless revivals of "God Bless America"—which has replaced the innocuous fun of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" during the seventh inning stretch at ballparks. That's a song so hopelessly jingoistic that, as one wonderfully lucid music reporter reminded us, Woody Guthrie wrote "This Land Is Your Land" as his disgusted response. I'll concede that the song's playing in of itself in a wounded time may be fairly harmless or even therapeutic. But when combined with stadium-wide rhythmic chants of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" the feeling is instead, as my fiancée noted one night at Yankee Stadium, very much like a scene from "Triumph of the Will." (I don't mean to compare our country or its current regime to the Nazis, Hitler, or fascism. I am commenting about the similarity of frightening nationalistic mob scenes that such a chauvinistic song so naturally accompanies. For the record, I have nothing against songs about the U.S.A. being a fine country, but I prefer "America the Beautiful" and "This Land Is Your Land" to the supremacist fare and awful verses of "God Bless America.")

Far from "the death of irony," I find scenes of this sort *bitterly ironic*, as much as the bizarre oddity of seeing Boston Red Sox fans rooting for the Yankees in the playoffs. (Hey, no wonder the Yanks finally lost. Anything Red Sox fans root for is bound to suffer wrenching disappointments.)

For that matter, what *would* anyone write in a rock 'n' roll or pop song, after September 11, to make the trumpeted "death of triviality" true? Hell, I myself wouldn't know what to say if I were given the task of writing a song concerning "what's going on." At best, if there's anything I could find worth commenting on, it's the attempts of Ashcroft and the conservative right wing of the Republicans to exploit the current crisis, in a thinly-veiled attempt to weaken the Bill of Rights that they've long held in contempt. However, even that detrimental reality is too complex for most songs, at least in all but the most careful and skilled hands. This is especially true when there is such a sense of fear in the population for its own safety that it is willing to tolerate this kind of erosion of its core freedoms. It's the sort of tough balancing act that only the most talented and smart can manage.

And once again, I put it plainly. If songwriters weren't moved

by the more direct provocation of the first nine months of Bush's rule... if they weren't moved enough to protest schemes for Arctic National Wildlife Preserve drilling, his vice-president's public dismissal of the benefits of conservation, and the general environmental neglect of an oil tycoon heir (see Bush's backpedal from crucial Kyoto accords, and the plethora of smaller but significant moves, such as reducing pollution control restrictions and permitting developers to build on wetlands without replacing them)... if songwriters failed to comment on Bush's plans for a Star Wars II system (which would waste untold billions of tax dollars and accomplish nothing but earning the wrath of our most important European allies), or his public desire to abandon the SALT treaties (doubly alienating every friend we have in Europe), or his irresponsible tax cut while our federal deficit continues

to climb towards the tens of trillions and the projected budget surplus has vanished... Then how is it that these songwriters will be shaken out of their lethargy by a terrorist attack and suddenly be able to make sense of far more complex events?

Of course, those few, critically neglected artists who *have* been known for social and political comment will continue to comment. For example, Bad Religion has a great song on their forthcoming LP *The Process of Belief* called "Kyoto Now" that *does* confront the issue of global environmental preservation. It's a simple, no-nonsense plea inspired by one of the worst aspects of our new administration. Yet it is important to note that the

song was composed and recorded *before* September 11, and moreover was par for the veteran band's course. Must we remind everyone that it has always been possible to record music that reflects current concerns, not just since the recent cataclysm? But the media neither encourages or much covers such songs, do they? Likewise, the public itself will surely turn to music for a means of escape, not for content, as it has been trained to by a cynical industry with no vested interest or desire to be relevant.

The labels, radio, TV, and music critics have spent most of their time promoting artists who've never shown the slightest inclination to talk about world events. Dreaming up a new world full of credible social lyricists will not make it happen. You might as well expect fish to walk when the pond dries up, given the necessity of adapting to changed circumstances. If there is new blood out there, and there is a new willingness to hear them—whereas before, such pertinence was yawned at or even frowned upon—then maybe a big change will take place. But forgive me for being cynical when I say I haven't seen it and I don't expect to see it. What I expect is just more of the same crap. What the industry does promote, like the lamentable Linkin Park, has no more to say about our lives than Destiny's Child, and I just don't

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# HIT SQUAD

see either them or anyone else suddenly turning into Marvin Gaye, Paul Simon, or Billy Bragg.

Let me again quote from my essay last year, to drive home the point that last year's incessantly mouthed prediction utterly failed to materialize. Said I: "Why must rock writers and social commentators spew this ridiculous claptrap year after year? It would be nice if the majority of young musicians were so politically savvy, but most musicians are inspired by developments in music, not by presidential press conferences."

Nor, must I add now, are they inspired by terrorists, no matter how much they've changed the American attitude as we have long known it. In the end, popular music will just continue following the course of non-engagement that it's been on for three decades. And the underground stopped spawning a lyrical alternative in this regard around the time Kurt Cobain's crew moved the goal posts.



OK, moving to what actually did happen in the underground in the first year of King George II, I further suggested last year, "The time is ripe for something big to happen, but no one knows how to find the future in music. The problem isn't lack of energy. Those old touchstones like the Ramones are constantly replicated in groups like the Donnas or Huntingtons, but it's something *new* that's

required. Aping the Ramones in 2000 is like aping Eddie Cochran or Gene Vincent in 1980. Levi & the Rockats did just that in 1980, reviving Cochran and Vincent. But then as now, it's not going to get us to something exciting in our own time."

In my opinion, no incredible change of any great musical magnitude happened in the underground in 2001, despite the ripeness of the time, but I am nevertheless pleased to note the second straight year of improvement over the moribund 1999. And whereas 2000's better showing was mostly chalked up to the sharp work of old veterans who sat out 1999, 2001 saw the emergence of many groups that have begun to embrace the supremely melodic and started to play fresh pop and rock 'n' roll again.

One of my writers in *The Big Takeover*, Chris Parker, wrote an op-ed piece in our brand new issue 49 that painstakingly listed dozens of new and upcoming artists that have released revitalized, challenging underground pop music, from Sparklehorse to Beulah to the Pernice Brothers. And I think just about any writer looking back at 2001 could easily make their own list (whereas in the recent past there were valid complaints that the scene was growing weary). For me, the most pleasant new-music event of 2001 was the sheer greatness of the Pernice Brothers' second LP, my number one pick of the year. A groundswell has begun to form around the extraordinarily gifted Joe Pernice, and the hook-laden *The World Won't End*. One listen is enough to prove wrong the idea that people are tired of guitars, or that conventional pop melodies can't be sung over them and still be *au courant*. Hell, every one of Pernice's bridges would be someone else's prized chorus, so insanely catchy are his tunes. It may be simple, and it sure is classic construction. But the pleasure of

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singing along to a fantastic melody and striking words is the sort of thing that *hasn't* gone out of style since humankind began. For all the critical reams devoted to electronica and post-rock the last few years, I refuse to back off my insistence that those newer, hipper genres' lack of this essential attraction renders them inferior and ephemeral in comparison.

This also explains the continued rise in popularity of Robert Pollard's Guided By Voices, and his unusually personal, wonderful, watershed LP, *Isolation Drills*, a full seven years after the group enjoyed the novelty of being the new critics' pets. Whether it is Porter, Berlin, the Gershwins, Lieber/Stoller, Berry, Lennon/McCartney, Davies, Bacharach, Pernice, or Pollard, people are just plain suckers for a great tune married to an impassioned and cutting rendition!!!! Underground guitar music dead? I think not.

And though I am cheating to include their LP again, after voting for it last year on an obscure U.K. import, the belated U.S. release of Idlewild's red-hot LP in 2001 (and their two big, powerful, sold-out U.S. tours) was extraordinary. That's the most excited I've been over a live band in a while, and the LP also remained on my turntable all through 2001, despite being six months old to my ears when the year began. It is one of these high-thrill, rollercoaster records of magnetic energy and terrific songs, and a singer with fine dynamic range (instead of the one-dimensional shouting that's ruined just about every punkish record with potential since 1995). The new LP they are working on now is the one I most anticipate with licked chops. I hereby grant them the title of hottest and best rock 'n' roll band in the world.

There was plenty more. Fugazi made their best LP over a decade into their career, and Ken Stringfellow released a soulful singer-songwriter solo LP that blew away his often fine power-pop career as a head-Posie. His one-man show in New York a week after September 11, given the remarkable moment, was the most emotional concert I have seen in years. Gene rebounded from a disappointing third LP with a better showing on *Libertine*; T.S.O.L. returned with *Disappear* and regained much of the fiery footing they left off with, 1979-1983; The Muttonbirds made me lament that I missed their only N.Y. gig some years back via a supremely beautiful, unusually riveting live LP, *Live in Manchester*; Idaho's latest, *Levitate*, was typically engrossing and even more internal and broody/moody than ever; and the biggest surprise of all, the Chameleons' shocking 2000 reunion produced a superb LP in 2001, 15 years after the amazing *Strange Times*. (OK, *Why Call It Anything* wasn't as great as their original three LPs and drop-dead brilliant posthumous EP, *Tony Fletcher Walked on Water*, but on its own merits it was something of a miracle.) Elsewhere, Low's *Things We Lost In The Fire* made me much more of a fan than I was. New Order made their first really good LP in 20 years, *Get Ready*, and Jason Falkner (*Necessity: The 4-Track Years*) and Jon Brion (*Meaningless*) chipped in solo pop records that justified their L.A. reputations dating back to their one-time collaboration as the Grays. These LPs were all reasons to be glad I am still listening to music and covering it for a living!

## JACKRABID

And if any year can also be judged by how many wonderful LPs it gives us by new favorites, I had a great time with Cosmic Rough Riders' *Enjoy the Melodic Sunshine*, Fugu's *Fugu 1*, Elbow's *Asleep in the Back*, Mazarin's *A Tall Tale Storyline*, Sigur Rós's *Ágætis Byrjun*, Augie March's "sunset studies", January's *I Heard Myself in You*, Interpol's EP, and Red Telephone's *Cellar Songs*, while being pleasantly surprised by Bevis Frond's step up in production and editing on *Valedictory Songs*, finally fully realizing his long-standing knack for a forceful tune.

And that old format, the EP, also came to new life in the form of three stupendous outings from old veterans in new circumstances, Frankie Stubbs' of Leatherface's solo 10", Adam Franklin of Swervedriver's first by-himself disc (which shouldn't

have been released under the name of his last side project, Toshack Highway), the *Everyday Rock 'n' Roll is Saving My Life* EP, and Wiz from Mega City Four's new band, Serpico, all gave us fantastic short-players that extremely few people here knew about, let alone bought. But they were all knockouts!

So while no big bang happened in 2001 that will kick off some mighty and memorable scene in the future, one thing has become clear: Now that the

major labels have once again turned their back on any independent music with any spark and real heart, as they did throughout the 1980s, the indie scene has slowly nursed itself back to some health. Left to develop their own sounds at their own pace, and without the fools gold carrot of megabucks contracts to throw their artistic impulses off the track, artists are rediscovering the simple joys of making music just for the love of it, and relying on grassroots support to sustain modest careers. It sort of feels like a nice Western town finding it's soul again, after the gold or silver boom has dried out, leaving real settlers to make a more hard-working life out of the place, in place of the get-rich-schemers. At this pace, we may yet see another indie-art and music explosion, comparable to the 1973-1992 salad days being chronicled in books, and it won't be led by the Strokes.



Oh, that reminds me, those are my two final topics of my underground music survey for 2001.

I seem to be the only person who sees little reason for joy in the Strokes. They're not the worst band I have ever seen, and they are young and good looking and dress well. (Not that I ever care much about such things.) But musically, I see no reason why out of all the indie-minded bands of the last several years, this one would emerge as the most critically congratulated, fan-frenzied band. I have seen them three times without trying, twice with GBV, and once with the Doves, and have tried their LP on a number of occasions. Yet I fail to find any justification for this nearly unanimous celebration. What I hear is a band that rips

*I seem to be the only person who sees little reason for joy in the Strokes.*



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off the Velvet Underground so blatantly in basic approach and style (how many times do they use Lou Reed's "Rock 'n' Roll" riff/style?) that they make the young Dream Syndicate seem like pathfinders, while also replicating Television's Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd's guitar leads, and taking the Talking Heads' basslines. Further, several of the Strokes' mediocre tunes sound like warmed over Blondie covering "You Can't Hurry Love." I mean, who is left to steal from out of the old Max's and CBGB art-rock punk scene? The Tuff Darts? Patti Smith? Wayne County? Will their next LP be more like the Ramones, Cramps, and Dead Boys?

I wouldn't mind so much if the Strokes were of the caliber of those New York underground legends in writing, playing, or in live ability. But, no way, Jose. They are a third-rate version of all of their obvious heroes wrapped up in one, with a rather substandard drummer and a bag of ho-hum hooks. Most unfortunate of all, though, is the singular lack of the kind of committed passion that was so endlessly displayed by those older bands they are stealing from. You get the feeling the Strokes love the street-pose, clothes, and art school genius attitude of a Verlaine, Reed, or Byrne, but they don't have any of that same burning desire seared into their sound.

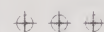
Stealing wholesale from a 1973-1975 scene is sad enough, since the bands they so admire are justifiably remembered as doing something new and original, *not* ripping off something from 28 years before them. (Which, in the CBGB bands' case, would have meant sounding like 1945 swing records!) But that the press, the public, and even pretty much every discerning fan and friend I know loves this band make this, I believe, the biggest leave-taking of collective senses caused by horrendous industry overhype (blast that horrid British press for starting this!!!) I have seen in all my 21 years as a music journalist.

And sadly, just discussing them here, in this manner, just helps feeds the hype more-as I am aware, and to my regret. I would have loved it if every single one of the 1000 people who asked me about the Strokes in 2001 (especially the ones who asked me on the air, or in an interview! darnit!), most of whom had never heard the band but had been overwhelmed by the hype-machine in overdrive, had asked me instead about the 200 better, going-nowhere, far more original, striving bands that haven't received 1/200th of the attention called to their more noble efforts. This is perhaps the bigger tragedy here that no one mentions. I made a vow that every time someone asks me that dreaded question yet again, "What do you think of the Strokes?!!!" will first get the reply, "I'm so glad someone *finally* asked me about Pernice Brothers and Idlewild!!! I'll be glad to tell you about them!" before I patiently explain why that question so bores me. And how before I answer it, how giving any kind of answer, yea, nea, or indifferent, just dooms me to be asked it again and again when we could be devoting that time to something so much more meaningful and genuinely significant, instead of the cheap comet sighting yet again. I feel like the professor quite prepared to discuss his book's substance only to be asked repeatedly about the most inane, least creative, thoughtless detail of it over and over, to the complete exclusion of anything else the book might have to offer, to the point where the rest just totally disappears.

Believe me, no one would appreciate a New York messiah of underground rock 'n' roll more than I. I lived through the early

1979-1982 Bad Brains and remember when they were the finest rock 'n' roll band in the world. But the early Bad Brains were *unprecedented* (and remain lauded for that quality), plus they could flat-out outplay any other band in the nation. This jive hype job cannot sustain forever the meager wares and abject, stifling unoriginality of the Strokes. Again, if you try to ignore them, everyone asks you anyway, so I've finally decided to address it here and be done with it!!!! You see, if you say you don't like them, you end up having to discuss them for a half hour that could have been spent talking about Leatherface, Adam Franklin, or Idaho instead. Or other folks who have been toiling in relative obscurity for a decade making truly amazing, unique music of the sound of now, only to have people say, "Who?" instead of "Wow! I must hear them!!!" Let us from now on talk about them instead.

As a final point, though I don't fault the Strokes, or really any similar band of the future, for enjoying the fruits of this outrageous and flatulent over-rating, I do hold everyone else who so totally over-rates them accountable (which sadly includes just about every good friend of taste I have, save a few, thanks Zeus). Unless the band gets one hell of a lot better, and a hell of a lot more original, I believe they will ultimately be judged by music history as the most ridiculous and overheated craze since, well, dot coms. Or at least Jonathan Fireater!



And speaking of history, I made reference to books appearing about the older indie days, 1978-1991. A new generation of kids is becoming interested in the pre-Nirvana underground scene they were never told much about after *Nevermind* obliterated it. The older scene that started it all (the one the Strokes now rehash) was effectively chronicled in two great books a few years ago, *Please Kill Me* and *From the Velvets to the Voidoids*. Now the 1978-1991 scene that I experienced so vividly and covered so enthusiastically in *The Big Takeover* has finally come into wider recognition via three books published in 2001. (Two of the three I am proud to say I am quoted in, going back to my earliest *BT* issues in 1980/1981. The other borrows substantially from one of my most prized interviews.)

"Hurrah," I say, because it is clear that folks are looking back to those early days. They're looking for chronicles of that more pure expression, of that vibrant and lasting scene that coincided with the rise of indie record labels and a tour circuit which the godfather punks of 1968-1979 didn't enjoy. Michael Azzerad's book *Our Band Could Be Your Life* was a joy, and may well have led to January 2002's excellent and shocking Mission of Burma reunion shows. (Yes!!!!!!) Likewise, Brendan Mullen and Mark Spitz's aural history of L.A. punk, *We Got The Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk*, was as entertaining as its New York/Cleveland/Detroit equivalent, *Please Kill Me*. And though the fact-checking, on Steve Blush's *Hardcore, A Tribal History*, was suspect for its first edition (they claim a revised second one will address that), and I don't care much about the thrash bands of 1983-1986 and the rituals of the pathetic slam dance and the mosh pit that sadly take up half of his book, he roped in just about every major player of the 1979-1986 outbreak, and as a result provided some strong illumination in the other half.

All these books, which I read *hungrily*, even knowing so much of the stories already, are rather a fine vindication, I think, of all the space I devoted then to the incredible but terribly unfashionable and unpopular bands of that time, especially all the ones that the mainstream critics either ignored or openly rejected-and



still remain clueless about. For example, Mullen took a huge chunk of my Tomata Du Plenty (Screamers) interview with my blessing and pride; folks like the Effigies got their rightful due for the first time in Blush's book; Azzerad brought back in detail how poorly supported were the legends of those days like Mission of Burma and Minor Threat, outside of tiny college radio stations and little fanzines (like mine was then). We were insisting that these bands were in fact the important voices of the time, not the crapola that newspaper writers, big radio, and *Rolling Stone* proffered. Now even VH1 and MTV histories treat these bands seriously, as if everyone loved and supported them when they were around. Fast and loose fiction!

May there be a similar new breed of artists pursuing their own idea of music with real edge, without worrying if they can get it on the radio or not. May I find them and cover them. And may there be books about them in 20 years time.

## PART TWO: THE COMMERCIAL SCENE

Looking over my essay from 2000, I'm reminded of how much changed in 12 months after so little deviation in the previous year (what I called then "the year of the status quo"). 2000, like 1999, was another year of fast-food teen-music garbage, the kind that made Leslie Gore look like the Rolling Stones.

As I said specifically, and as was even quoted to my great amusement and happiness in the *Village Voice's* "Pazz and Jop" issue, "Looking over the Top 20 LP sellers of 2000, what did we get? *The same dubious roll call*. The Backstreet Boys (4.2 million), Ms. Spears (7.8 million), 'N Sync (a staggering 9.9 million of the hideous *No Strings Attached*), and Christina Aguilera (3.8 million). I.e., *another 25 million LPs sold of this supreme aural junk food*. 50,000,000 LPs over two years of this teen pop caca!!! Holy Minneola! Fuck drugs for the young generation, they don't need 'em; they've got to be drugged to stupefaction to be sucking on this barren tit. It's like 50,000,000 hits of valium, like taking ecstasy without any ecstasy. What kind of null and comfortably numb generation parts with somewhere between \$500,000,000 and \$900,000,000 of its allowance money over two years for the right to be so stunada?"

So it is with a great deal of relief and some satisfaction to note that the tide finally turned in 2001. Not that the media noticed, of course. They served us up shots of Britney's boobs at every opportunity. But I note with glee that the talentless bimchette "slave" saw her sales plummet anyway. Perhaps 2.9 million units of *Britney* is no real "flop" per se, but it's barely a third of what *Oops! I Did it Again* sold, and one gets the feeling that her weenie fans are finally wising up to the fact that she's all sex and flasher virgin tease, with all the subtlety of a striptease dancer at Scores or a waitress at Hooters. Simultaneously, on the mimbo front, N'Sync still sold big at 4.4 million of *Celebrity*, but that also wasn't even 45% of what the staggeringly putrid *No Strings Attached* suckered the high school kids of America into purchasing.

And that was it. All their other toothless teen wonders were nowhere to be seen, and the legions of new teen talent-show graduate wannabes desperate to join their formerly swelled ranks were left even further out in the cold. Let's be blunt: The record industry got away with foisting this unadulterated immature pap on us for as long as they could, but they're finally going to be forced to find some other new avenue in which to sell this

lowest-of-all-common denominator crap to ever-younger buyers.

Significantly, the record labels responsible for this aren't escaping from this cynical, irresponsible strategy without a severe penalty: Having abandoned and ignored a much more important core of their audience, the more sophisticated college-aged and post-college aged music buyer, in order to market these insipid teenagers to pre-teens, the labels have largely alienated that constituency of more involved and mature human beings, to the point where such folks have fallen out of the habit of buying much of *anything*.

Everywhere the record biz turns, they find discouraging news borne of their own insane myopia for bottom line returns now in place of the cultivation of musical awareness for the long run. There is a good reason why the industry's sales slumped a whopping 2.8 percent in 2001 after ten years of increases. Their traditional staples of the last decade have begun to fail them completely, a state of affairs bound to ring massive alarm bells in an industry suddenly caught without consumer loyalty for its most relied-upon product lines.

To whit, the much older rap and country divisions also took a far more substantial hit in 2001, in the sense that they were considered reliable perennials. OK, weenie pop was bound to wane, as everyone knew that it would eventually be seen for the thin veneer it is. But the staples which the labels have relied on year-in-year-out, the ones that engendered real respect from its more developed listenership, seemed to dissipate en masse. After all the fuss attending Eminem and the eight million copies he sold of *The Marshall Mathers LP* last year, and similar typical blockbusters from Dr. Dre and Nelly (the three artists sold 17 million LPs together in 2001), not one rapper (save for holdover sales from Nelly's 2000 LP) cracked the Top 20 in sales in 2001. Country is in even greater freefall: 2000 saw both Dixie Chicks and Faith Hill sell over 6.8 million LPs total. Yet aside from the oddball joker in the pack of the year, the *O Brother, Where Art Thou* soundtrack, which has no real relation to Nashville as we have come to know it and exists nearly as a genre in and of itself anyway, no country artists were found in the Top 20, not even Tim McGraw.

Worse for a suddenly ailing industry, they seem unable to find a way out of this mess they created for themselves. They can blame internet sharing all they want, but they hide from the fact that they have failed miserably to find and develop talent that truly galvanizes a population to buy records in droves and hang onto them. Labels can't even get some blockbuster LP from some facile trend any more. After a whole year of mediocre releases, Jim Farber of *The Daily News* noted in his year-end recap that the year's top-selling LP by Linkin Park only sold 4.8 million copies, which would have made it only the eighth best seller of 2000. And it isn't all September 11, either. Sales were down long before.

And I don't think the labels can even take the hint, from the wacky diversity shown in the charts this year, concerning the sort of greater diversification and genre-stretching they need, when the disparate likes of Shaggy, Enya, and *O Brother* sold 12.5 million records in a down year. They'd better get it together and put some quality control into their sagging mega-rosters, or the flight from retail, set in motion at long last, will continue.

For it's clear that the majors are distracted by the major technology issues underfoot. Having vanquished Napster, they still couldn't put the genie back in the bottle (and I don't mean



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Christina Aguilera's winkin' bare midriff) of kids learning *not* to waste a nauseating \$19 on a shitty product. Even if kids can't get it for free any more (and many still can, from other file-sharing systems and CD burning programs), they've finally learned what a waste of money this overpriced product is. The labels can encode their releases to prevent burning and uploading all they want, but they can't change the fact that they got away with gouging for trivial music for far too long! Maybe the future is monthly subscription: The majors current scheme to maintain control in the form of song rentals that vanish from your screen is clearly moronic, though. Who wants their favorite songs vanishing, when the joy of music ownership has always been the ability to play it any time you like in perpetuity?

Finally, since it is rock music that I traditionally favor, did anything happen this year in that genre that actually sold records? The answer is a resounding no. Can anyone at all feel uplifted, sustained, revitalized, and truly energized by the turgid metal/hard rock/stadium rock dressed in quasi-alterna clothes represented by the likes of Linkin Park (4.8 million), Staind (4.2 million), Creed (3.5 million), and soft-metalheads Nickelback (2.6 million)? OK, one has to laugh to see all these guitar bands selling the lion's share of records in 2001, if only to stick it up the nose of all the hipster critics who pontificated that the guitar was dead a while back. But with music this bloated and lifeless, I'm not sure we could really call the patient living anyway.

And aside from the tepid dinosaur rock of Dave Matthews (2.9 million) and the ego-saturated U2, who else actually sold some fricken rock records in 2001? The list reads like a roll call of the worst shitty punk, bad nü-metal, and awful pseudo-alterna rock bands imaginable. If all we have to show for the tired old, once galloping horse called rock 'n' roll is Godsmack, 3 Doors Down, Incubus, Tool, Sum 41, Alien Ant Farm, Fuel, Limp Bizkit, and Blink 182, it might be time to take the old horse out in back and shoot him. What a murderer's row of horse manure! These bands are so dire that they almost make one miss such forgettable forebears as Soundgarden and Stone Temple Pilots. No wonder the underground is flourishing, if this is the major labels' idea of rock music to spend their signing and marketing millions on.



It seemed that the biggest news in the mainstream came not from the living artists, but from the loss of two dead ones, George Harrison and Joey Ramone.

Firstly, I remain amazed at the Beatles ability to sell LPs to people who were born a decade after their final LP, *Abbey Road*. Miraculously, the latest flimsy excuse for a "greatest hits" without calling it one, *1*, sold an impressive 2.9 million copies in 2001, despite already selling 5 million when it was released in 2000! Talk about staying power! It's all the more remarkable that the band is *constantly* rediscovered by every generation that comes along, and they sell more records now than they even did at the height of their fame!

As I write, another compilation of Beatles covers comes my way via the *I Am Sam* soundtrack. But despite the surfeit of respected talents, such as Sarah McLachlan, Paul Westerberg, Aimee Mann, Nick Cave, Ben Harper, and Sheryl Crow, the LP is a *total* dud compared to the depth of inspiration which the original artists provided. Having loved the Beatles more than

any other artist for 35 years, I'm still astonished that their music feels invested with more spark and magic than any of the thousands and thousands of others I have heard and loved since.

And for the second straight year, the Beatles were the only ones in the Top 20 LP sales whose music I genuinely loved, so the contrast again between their music's timelessness and of modern pop's inherent and total disposability, is exposed to the core. Long after Alicia Keys becomes as remote as the top sellers of a decade ago (Michael Bolton and Vanilla Ice, anyone?), or even of a few years ago (see ya, Mariah!!!). The Beatles' 1960s recordings will still be selling millions to folks not yet in existence—a lesson the record industry contigues to ignore, even when it's being thrown right in their face like this for the second straight year.

I said of them last year, and I think it is worth repeating in light of Harrison's sad death: "So was there anyone at all in the mainstream that made me happy this year, either as a fan myself, or as seven-time uncle and high school assistant coach? Yeah, I guess there was one after all. The sad thing is that they've been broken up for 31 years and hell, I was a member of their fan club when I was six. Let's just say that the Beatles' *1* is about the oldest news to me there is in my life. I can vividly remember playing those songs on my parents' bulky living room hi-fi when they were first released, when I was in kindergarten, and I still pour over the letters, X-mas single and LP, and the news briefs the New Jersey chapter of their fan club sent me from 1968 until 1970, when the band broke up. I suppose there is some value to the way all the Beatles' anthologies, reissues, compilations, books, videos, t-shirts, and coffee mugs sell like hotcakes every time Capitol or Apple decides that their coffers are looking a bit spare. Every new generation, even this current one that wasn't even born when Lennon was gunned down, gets to wonder at their sheer genius. The greatest artists of the 20th century (by far, well ahead of all their principal competition who didn't write their own material: Armstrong, Sinatra, and Presley), *it is proof of the Beatles' staggering brilliance that they've never had to be placed in any historical context to enthrall new listeners decade after decade*. If their music can still sell in such numbers in 2000, commensurate with those seen in the height of Beatlemania 36 years ago, there may yet be hope for the young, that they might yet get the hint and produce something worth buying 36 years from now on such a grand scale. But as the Beatles seem as lonesome in the Top 50 LP sellers of 2000 as a committed atheist at a Billy Graham revival, it seems we are condemned to be given this seed year after year only to see it sown on concrete instead of any topsoil worth tilling."

It's just too bad that George's death reminds us that the music is less mortal than its makers. We haven't lost a Kink, Hollie, or Zombie yet, but nearly every other incredible '60's band has at least one dead member, and like the Byrds, the Beatles now have two. Alas.

It should be noted, however, that I don't buy the obituaries that said we will all feel older now and more mortal now that a Beatle died of natural causes. True, his immense wealth and fame couldn't beat back the ravages of his own smoking habit. But personally, I felt those things not because of the death of a Beatle, whom I never met, or even from my teenage hero Joey Ramone, who I did meet a dozen times, but from the death of my own father and two of my closest friends in 1999.

Gentlemen, a little perspective here! If it takes the death of an artist you admire to remind you that your time is drawing shorter, I suggest you have been pretty clueless about real life. Whereas when your dad or your best friends die, you do worry about the impermanence of your other close relationships and



your own life. The death of two people who weren't your friends, neither of whom had made a profound record between them in two decades, just cannot have the same impact on you. Those obituaries were overstated. But there's no question that it's sad. Harrison contributed a great deal to the band, more than many might realize, and I would have loved to interview him.

If his death really means anything, it is how much more we should appreciate those great musicians of the 50s and 60s while they remain alive, because during this decade and the next, we are going to start losing them in droves!!!! What a sorry reality.

As for Joey Ramone:

As I said, I met him a dozen times or so, starting with a short chat after a gig at the Showplace in Dover, New Jersey in 1979, when their most recent LP, *Road to Ruin*, was shaking the walls of my parents' den whenever they left the house. I was only 17 and still stuck in the incredibly safe, pretty, conservatively drab New York City suburb of Summit, NJ, but my friends and I couldn't stop laughing over his and Dee Dee's lyrics on those first four LPs, at the same time that we were totally pulverized by the wall of punishment their records provided. I remember him saying, in that thick goomba Queens accent, "howyadoone," and when I told him that my friends and I covered "Blitzkrieg Bop" in our unnamed band in the (I don't want to go down to the) basement, he didn't look like he'd heard it 10,000 times, though I am sure he had. In short, he was like other punks in the bands I had briefly met up 'til then, such as Lenny Kaye and Mark Mothersbaugh—he just seemed like a normal Joe, "one of us," as "Pinhead" suggested.

Years later, when I was more comfortable talking to such giants in my life (since they were so accommodating right off the bat, living up to the punk ideal that everyone is in fact important, and real exchange was the currency), I had a long talk with him over a drink at Coney Island High, where he spent a lot of time with our mutual friend, club owner (and D Generation leader) Jessie Malin. I told him that that very day (in 1996) I had watched my video of the Ramones play a dozen songs on the Don Kirshner Music TV show in 1977, where they'd blown the doors off the first two LPs' stuff in front of a bunch of confused/stunned/bewildered clueless straights and about half a dozen punk girls dancing in the front row. He smiled when I told him how revolutionary that moment, and that sound, still was to me two decades later, and how I am always reminded watching that video that it felt like punk was the biggest secret you could ever stumble on, like a Pandora's box you'd die to open. And he smiled even harder when, to illustrate, I noted that the other major act to appear on that TV show that day was the Ohio Players. We both laughed and he noted (in a thick Queens accent), "Things were more eclectic in those days."

I liked the guy, basically. He was always someone who looked like he dug it when people said they appreciated his work. Lord knows I did. Part of me will always be 16-17 and shaking the walls, my mouth agape, my pulse and heart racing to "Loudmouth," "Glad to See You Go," "Why is It Always This Way?" "I Don't Want You" and "Bad Brain," at volumes no sane man should ever attempt. Is it any wonder that I never needed to take or drink anything solely to fight off boredom? How could anyone be bored with a stack of Ramones LPs and Buzzcocks singles to play as loud as fuck? (It still works to this day.)

The House of Love's Guy Chadwick once sang "The Beatles and the Stones/Made it good to be alone." Were I to write that song, it would have been "The Buzzcocks and Ramones/Made it good to be alone," because you never felt less alone in your life with their records, imagining "Hanging out on Second Avenue,"

## JACKRABID

"Eating Chicken Vindaloo" with every punk rocker in town. It just doesn't seem right not to see that near-7 foot frame all over town any more. It just isn't right... He just shouldn't be dead, and that's all there is to it. Back to the Don Kirshner video and those old records, I guess. He's always alive for me there....

## A FEW NOTES ON THE FOLLOWING LIST OF 2001 PICKS

I have once again broken up my picks for the 100 best LPs of 2001 into two separate lists, one for the 60 best LPs of new recordings, and one for the 40 best LPs of old recordings. It's always been hard to integrate the plethora of archive releases that were predominantly made up of previously unreleased material in only one list of a "best LPs" category. As I noted a few years ago, comparing a 10-CD box of Hank Williams classics and outtakes from half a century ago to some modern Seattle garage rock band is already puzzling, and remains well-nigh impossible. Likewise, looking back at 2001, there is no way I can sit here and say that Fugazi's great new LP is in any measurable way better than a 10-CD, 230-song blockbuster box set of Billie Holiday sessions set down 30 years before I was born. So although I don't make that great a distinction as a fan, I find it easier to break it down into these two separate votes, so as not to over-weight music that has already clearly passed the severest test of time, and music that is of the most recent vintage..

Moreover, if we are to look back at a year and what it gave us, I believe we should primarily be voting for people making music today, as part of today's music climate, not some moldy old museum piece that just happened to have been exhumed or re-promoted in an arbitrary calendar year, like Capitol's lucrative cash-in Beatles I!!!!

Finally, on this subject, I know I voted for Idlewild's amazing *100 Broken Windows* last year on U.K. import. And yeah, just 'cause it got released in America 9 months later doesn't really make it a 2001 release. But for most people it surely was (it's not like it sold boatloads as an import, but it sure moved fast on its release here) and, well, even if the excuse is a poor one and I should just stop arguing it, like everyone who bought the 2001 U.S. issue I just kept playing it over and over, so what the hey...

I am also only listing five singles, as this category has all but gone the way of the dodo. When I was a kid, a single was a single. They were little pieces of plastic I bought for 98 cents at a record shop. This dodge that many today make in their list of favorite singles of "LP emphasis track" cannot in any way pass muster in terms of critical trial. Whereas real singles, i.e., actually released pieces of vinyl, tape, or CD for commercial sale, must be weighed under the pressure of their relative worth vis-a-vis the purchase price, the "emphasis track" of an LP that no one bought separately from the LP is under no such requirement to stand on its own two feet.

And I refuse to go on the basis of a song having produced a video, even if it's by a popular band and I like the song a lot. For me, that should instead be called "Favorite Song You Were Forced On Radio and Television This Year." Whereas once upon a time, we all voted on the singles we bought, which expanded the reach of the category well beyond what was strictly marketed to



# HIT SQUAD

the masses (thus making it comparable to the wide array of votes every year for LPs that don't sell didley), now we all just vote for the songs for which the record labels paid the most money to the media in legal payola to get air time. It's bad enough that "independent pluggers" have sown up the airwaves and so-called "music television" with unadulterated, patented bribes in the millions, and that the labels further bribe every retail store with "product placement" money (good as that is for the stores, themselves beleaguered). Must we further reward this corrupt practice by maintaining a phony idea of "singles" like this which are wholly dependent on label marketing?

I challenge others listing their favorite "singles" of 2001 to insist on voting only for the singles they themselves bought (or would gladly buy if they didn't get them for free), or at least, those that were made commercially available as stand-alone releases like singles once were, not as "promo only" items. As proof that it still can be done, all five of my singles picks were in fact *bought* by me as proper singles of this sort. Three of the five I vote for, of course, are imports, even if they are by American artists such as Pernice Brothers: The actual term "single" has a currency overseas that it does not here. But the point remains, these are real singles.

Of course, we could all vote for our favorite "songs" of 2001, but for most who don't buy dozens and dozens of CDs a year, that just brings us back to the "emphasis tracks" that the labels successfully marketed-unless you have that rarity, a cool radio station near you that doesn't have its playlist locked up by Clear Channel or other programming gurus from a desk far away, or if you listen to internet radio, or your friends make you an awful lot of tapes and burned CDs. Hmmm....

In any case, I hope you enjoy the list, and I hope 2002 is a better year for us all in terms of pain, suffering, and mourning, whether personally, or as a nation, or as a global citizen...

## JACK RABID'S 2001 PICKS:

### 2001 BEST LPs (NEW RECORDINGS):

- 1) Pernice Brothers-The World Won't End (Ashmont)
- 2) Guided By Voices-Isolation Drills (TVT)
- 3) Idlewild-100 Broken Windows (Capitol) (note: 200 release in U.K./2001 in U.S.)
- 4) Ken Stringfellow-Touched (Manifesto)
- 5) The Chameleons-Why Call it Anything? (Artful/Universal U.K.)
- 6) The Muttonbirds-Live in Manchester (Shhhh! U.K.)
- 7) Idaho-Levitate (Idaho Music)
- 8) T.S.O.L.-Disappear (Nitro)
- 9) Gene-Libertine (Contra/Sub Rosa U.K.)
- 10) Fugazi-The Argument (Dischord)
- 11) Radiohead-Amnesiac (Capitol)
- 12) Cosmic Rough Riders-Enjoy the Melodic Sunshine (Poptones U.K.)
- 13) R.E.M.-Reveal (Warner Bros)
- 14) The Bevis Frond-Valedictory Songs (Woronzow/Rubric)
- 15) Ivy-Long Distance (Nettwerk)
- 16) Ron Sexsmith-Blue Boy (Cooking Vinyl/SpinART)
- 17) Jason Falkner-Necessity: The 4-Track Years (SpinART)
- 18) Jon Brion-Meaningless (Jon Brion)
- 19) Fugu-Fugu 1 (Minty Fresh)
- 20) Death Cab For Cutie-The Photo Album (Barsuk)
- 21) The Damned-Grave Disorder (Nitro)
- 22) Elbow-Asleep in the Back (V2 U.K.)
- 23) The Mighty Wah-Songs Of Strength and Heartbreak (Peoples Choice/Castle UK)
- 24) Adrian Borland-The Last Days of the Rain Machine (Red Sun HOLLAND)
- 25) Young Fresh Fellows-Because We Hate You (split with The Minus Five) (Mammoth)
- 26) Eyesinweasel-Live in the Middle East (Wigwam/Recordhead/Luna)
- 27) Various-Give the People What We Want: Songs of The Kinks (Sub Pop)
- 28) Mazarin-A Tall Tale Storyline (SpinART)
- 29) Kristin Hersh-Sunny Border Blue (4AD/Beggars Banquet)
- 30) Low-Things We Lost In The Fire (Kranky)
- 31) Airport 5 (Robert Pollard and Tobin Sprout)-Tower in the Fountain of Sparks (Luna)
- 32) New Order-Get Ready (Reprise/WEA)
- 33) Cinerama-John Peel Sessions (Manifesto)
- 34) Sigur Rós-Ágætis Byrjun (Fatcat/PIAS)
- 35) The Bomb-Torch Songs (Jettison)
- 36) Trembling Blue Stars-Alive To Every Smile (Sub Pop)

- 37) Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros-Global A Go-Go (Hellcat/Epitaph)
- 38) Joe Keithley-Beat Trash (Sudden Death CAN)
- 39) Violet Indiana-Roulette (Bella Union/Instinct)
- 40) Augie March-"sunset studies" (BMG AUS) (note: 2000 release overseas)
- 41) Red House Painters-Old Ramon (Sub Pop)
- 42) Robert Pollard and His Soft Rock Renegades-Choreographed Man of War (Luna)
- 43) XTC-Homegrown (Idea.TVT)
- 44) Quasi-The Sword of God (Touch and Go)
- 45) Mark Eitzel-The Invisible Man (Matador)
- 46) Brian Wilson-Live at The Roxy Theatre (Brimel/Oglia/ADA)
- 47) The Divine Comedy-Regeneration (EMI U.K.)
- 48) Gorky's Zygotic Mynci-How I Long to Feel That Summer in My Heart (Mantra/Beggars Banquet)
- 49) Burning Airlines-Identikit (Desoto)
- 50) Velvet Crush-Rock Concert (Action/Parasol)
- 51) Various-Take Me Home, John Denver Tribute (Badman)
- 52) Alejandro Escovedo-A Man Under the Influence (Bloodshot)
- 53) Joe Henry-Scar (Mammoth)
- 54) January-I Heard Myself in You (Poptones U.K.)
- 55) Red Telephone-Cellar Songs (Raise Giant Frogs/Fort-Point)
- 56) Oasis-Familiar to Millions live (Epic/Sony)
- 57) Stephen Hero-Landed (Ragoria U.K.)
- 58) Various-In Passing, Adrian Borland tribute (Pathos)
- 59) Jello Biafra-Become The Media (triple CD) (Alternative Tentacles)
- 60) Neil Young-Road Rock live (Reprise/WEA)
- H.M. Various-Space Age Air Raid: Montreal 2000 (Magwheel CAN)

### 2001 BEST LPs (OLD RECORDINGS/REISSUES):

- 1) The Wipers-Box Set (first three LPs) (Zeno)
- 2) Billie Holiday-Last Day: The Complete (10 CD box set) (Columbia/Legacy/Sony)
- 3) Leatherface-The Last (BYO) reissue
- 4) House of Love-John Peel Sessions 1988-1989 (Strange Fruit/Pinnacle U.K.)
- 5) The Kinks-BBC Sessions 1964-1977 (BBC/Sanctuary U.K.)
- 6) Echo & The Bunnymen-Crystal Days 1979-1999 (box set) (Warner Archives Rhino)
- 7) The Beatles-1 (Capitol) (note: 2000 LP holdover)
- 8) Lush-Ciao! (4AD/Beggars Banquet)
- 9) Screamers-In a Better World (Extravertigo/Xeroid)
- 10) The Beach Boys-Hawthorne, CA (double cd) (Brother/Capitol)
- 11) Buffalo Springfield-Box Set (Rhino)
- 12) The Action-Action Packed (Edsel/Demon U.K.)
- 13) Simon & Garfunkel-The Columbia Studio Recordings 1964-1970 (Columbia/Legacy/Sony)
- 14) Various-Ken Burns Jazz box set (Columbia/Legacy/Sony)
- 15) Young Canadians-Joyride on the Western Front (White Noise)
- 16) Paul Revere & the Raiders-Mojo Workout (Sony/Sundazed)
- 17) The Chills-Secret Box rarities 1980-2000 (Definitive NZ)
- 18) Radio Birdman-The Essential Radio Birdman (1974-1978) (Sub Pop)
- 19) Various-Nuggets 2 box set (Rhino)
- 20) The Velvet Crush-In The Presence of Greatness (reissue)/A Single Odyssey, A Collection of Non-LP Singles & EP Tracks (Action Musik/Parasol)
- 21) Zero Boys-Vicious Circle (Panic Button/Lookout!) reissue
- 22) Tim Buckley-Morning Glory Anthology (Elektra/The Dream Belongs to Me: 68-73 rare and unreleased) (Manifesto)
- 23) Etta James-Love Songs (Chess/MCA/UNI)
- 24) Bryan MacLean-Candy's Waltz (Sundazed)
- 25) Tobin Sprout-Demos & Outtakes (Recordhead Wigwam/Luna)
- 26) Leslie Gore-The Best Of 20th Century Masters Millennium Collections (Mercury/UNI)
- 27) Gram Parsons-Another Side of This Life: The Lost Recordings 1965-1966 (Sundazed)
- 28) Various-History of Portland Punk, Vol. 1 (Zeno)
- 29) Bob Marley & the Wailers-Trenchtown Days: Birth of a Legend (Epic/Legacy/Sony)
- 30) Dead Kennedys-early LP reissues (Manifesto)
- 31) West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band-reissues (Sundazed)
- 32) The Millennium-Magic Time (Sundazed)
- 33) M.I.A.-Lost Boys (Alternative Tentacles)
- 34) The Guess Who-Shakin' All Over! (Sundazed)
- 35) Flipper-Blowin' Chunks (ROIR) reissue
- 36) Gladys Knight and the Pips-The Best of (Columbia/Legacy/Sony)
- 37) Mutants-Fun Triminal (White Noise)
- 38) Peter Tosh-Live and Dangerous: Boston 1976 (Columbia/Legacy/Sony)
- 39) Velvet Underground-The Best of (Polydor)
- 40) Rubber City Rebels-Re-Tired (White Noise)
- H.M. Marginal Man-Double Image (In Your Eye) reissue
- H.M. Blur-The Best Of (Virgin)
- H.M. The Dead Boys-Twistin on the Devil's Fork: Live at CBGB 1977/78 (Hell Yeah Dionysus)
- H.M. Solomon Burke-Proud Mary (Sundazed) reissue
- H.M. Psychedelic Furs-Greatest Hits (Columbia/Legacy/Sony)

### 2001 BEST EPs

- 1) Frankie Stubbs-Frankie Stubbs
- 2) Toshack Highway-Everyday Rock 'n' Roll Is Saving My Life (Space Baby)
- 3) Serpico-Everyone Vs. Everyone (Boss Tuneage U.K.)
- 4) Belle and Sebastian-Sing Jonathan David (Jeepster/Matador)
- 5) The Black Watch-Christopher Smart (Saltwater)

### 2001 BEST SINGLES:

- 1) Pernice Brothers-"7:30" (Southpaw U.K.)
- 2) Idlewild-"These Wooden Ideas" (Food U.K.)
- 3) Guided By Voices-"Glad Girls" and "Chasing Heather Crazy" (TVT)
- 4) Gene-"Is It Over?" (Contra/Sub Rosa U.K.)
- 5) Belle and Sebastian-"Sing Jonathan David" (Jeepster/Matador) ✚

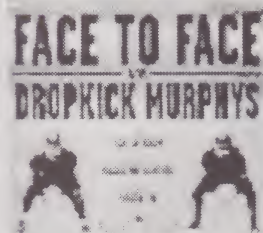
To check out Jack's magazine 20-year-old magazine, The Big Takeover, have a look at the web site at [www.bigtakeover.com](http://www.bigtakeover.com). Sample issues are only \$5 and subscriptions are only \$20 for four issues.)



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RANCID 1995 Photo: B.J. Paps

# ***Journey To The End:***

**Tim Armstrong, Matt Freeman and Lars Frederiksen talk about Operation Ivy, Rancid, and that whole East Bay thing.**

by Larry Livermore



**Reconcile to the belief  
Consumed in sacred ground for me  
There wasn't always a place to go  
But there always an urgent need to belong  
All these friends and all these people  
All these friends yea we were equals  
But what you gonna do when everybody goes on without you?**

**Started in '87 ended in '89  
You got a garage or an amp we'll play anytime  
It was just the four of yea man the core of us  
Too much attention unavoidably destroyed us  
Four kids on tour 3000 miles in a four door car  
Not knowing what was going on  
Do you think in a million years it would turn out like this?  
Hell, no premonition could have seen this**

## -- "Journey To The End Of The East Bay", by Rancid

Of all the bands to have come out of the East Bay and the Gilman Street Project, none is more legendary than Operation Ivy. Others sold more records, graced more magazine covers, broke through to the mainstream on a bigger scale, but Operation Ivy was, more than any other, the Gilman Street band. Their existence spanned only two years, their recorded output was limited to an EP, an album, a couple of compilation tracks and a few bootlegs. But they left a legacy that continues to grow with the years; kids who weren't even born when the band played its last show in 1989 wear Op Ivy shirts and patches and struggle to learn their guitar licks.

Most of Operation Ivy's fame - and nearly all of their record sales - came years after the band broke up. They played their last show, after all, just as their first and only album was being released. What with that, and the fact that all the members went on to other projects and remained remarkably tight-lipped, the Operation Ivy story has become shrouded in mystery as well as legend. So I considered it an enormous privilege and honor when Tim Armstrong (the artist formerly known as Lint) and Matt Freeman agreed to talk with me about the history of a musical partnership that dates back long before

Op Ivy and continues to this day in the form of Rancid. Our conversation covered some twenty years, from when Tim and Matt first met right up to the present. When we started talking about Rancid, guitarist and singer Lars

Frederiksen, who has been part of the band since 1993, joined in.

It's a long way from Berkeley to Albany, California, where Matt Freeman and Tim Armstrong grew up. Not in terms of miles; in fact the two towns couldn't be closer. Albany is snuggled up against Berkeley's northern border, and punk rockers wanting to take a break from a show at

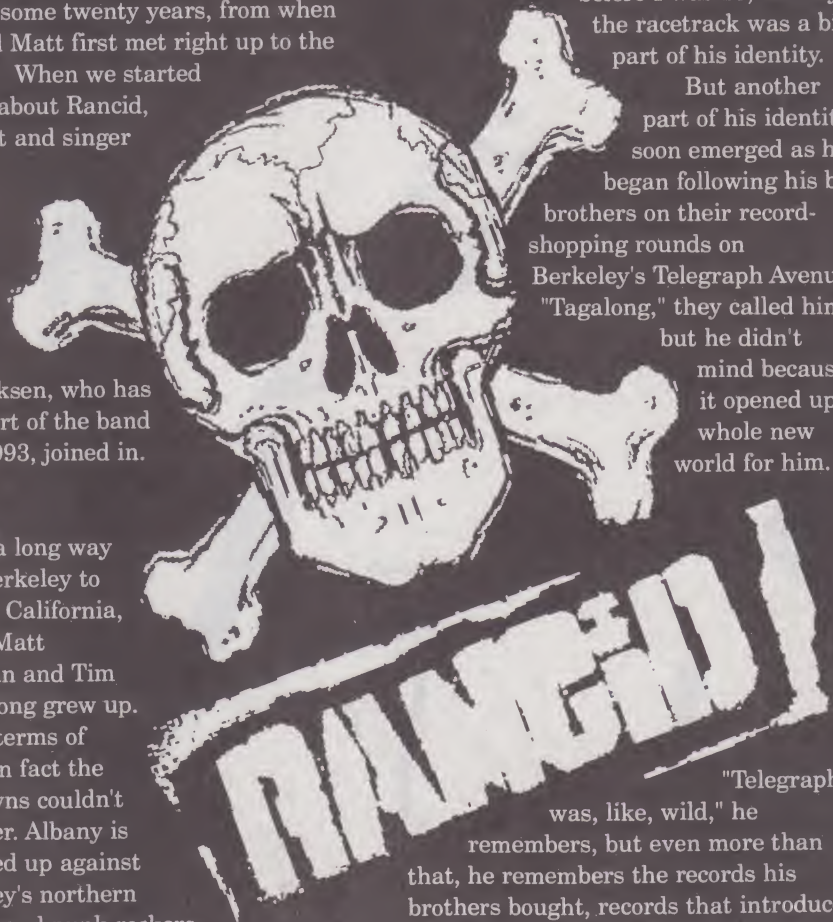
Gilman Street can walk to Albany's all-night donut shop in a matter of minutes.

But the clubs, the record shops, the cafes and hipster hangouts of Berkeley were a world apart from sleepy little Albany, a town that, as Matt puts it, "never really got out of the 50s until probably the 80s." Albany was working class, a place "with small houses, two bedroom, three bedroom houses where plumbers and cops and electricians lived."

The railroad still ran through Albany in those days, and one of Matt's early amusements was putting "any conceivable amount of anything on the train tracks" to watch things getting squashed. "Sometimes you almost got killed because, you know, the matchbox car ricocheted out and came at you."

Tim's earliest memories revolve around the racetrack, Golden Gate Fields, located right across the freeway from his house. Fans of *noir* films will recognize it as the setting for Stanley Kubrick's "The Killing," but for young Tim Armstrong, it was where he hung out, watching the jockeys, soaking up the atmosphere. "Before punk, before guitar, before I was 13," he says, the racetrack was a big part of his identity.

But another part of his identity soon emerged as he began following his big brothers on their record-shopping rounds on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue. "Tagalong," they called him, but he didn't mind because it opened up a whole new world for him.



"Telegraph was, like, wild," he remembers, but even more than that, he remembers the records his brothers bought, records that introduced him to bands like the Ramones, the



Clash and the Specials, bands whose music you can hear echoing through much of Tim's work over the years.

Matt saw Berkeley a bit differently. He was aware of its wildness, the edge, but in his case it was more personal, and sometimes, he admits, it "scared the hell out of me." His dad was a cop in Berkeley in the days when riots were still common, when police officers might be the targets of rocks and bottles, or even bullets and bombs.

"There was always this underlying fear," he remembers, "especially before my mother left. I'd hear them arguing about being careful, about watching who

## From senior year, Matt and Tim started seriously working together to make a band happen.

was driving down our street." This left Matt with a unique perspective later in life; while many punks are instinctively anti-cop, he sees both sides of the issue. Having grown up around cops, they seemed like "you know, working class guys, just regular people. Some of them were assholes and some weren't."

Matt and Tim had already known

each other for most of their lives before it ever occurred to them to try playing music together. They met in 1972, at a father-and-son group called the Y-Indian Guides. Matt remembers being shy at the time, and scared of Tim's big brother Greg, who was

showing off by doing pull-ups.

But they remained not much more than acquaintances until 1983, when, faced with the challenge of coming up with an act for Albany High's variety and talent show, the Cougar Follies, they tried playing the Elvis song, "Blue Suede Shoes."

"We were in the same instrumental music class," recalls Matt, "and we just started talking and decided to do it."

"It was weird. Playing the Cougar Follies was bizarre," says Tim. "You play in front of kids that you go to school with...Kids thought I was weird anyway. For some silly reason, I think we were nervous. I don't know why, it was a stupid fucking thing."

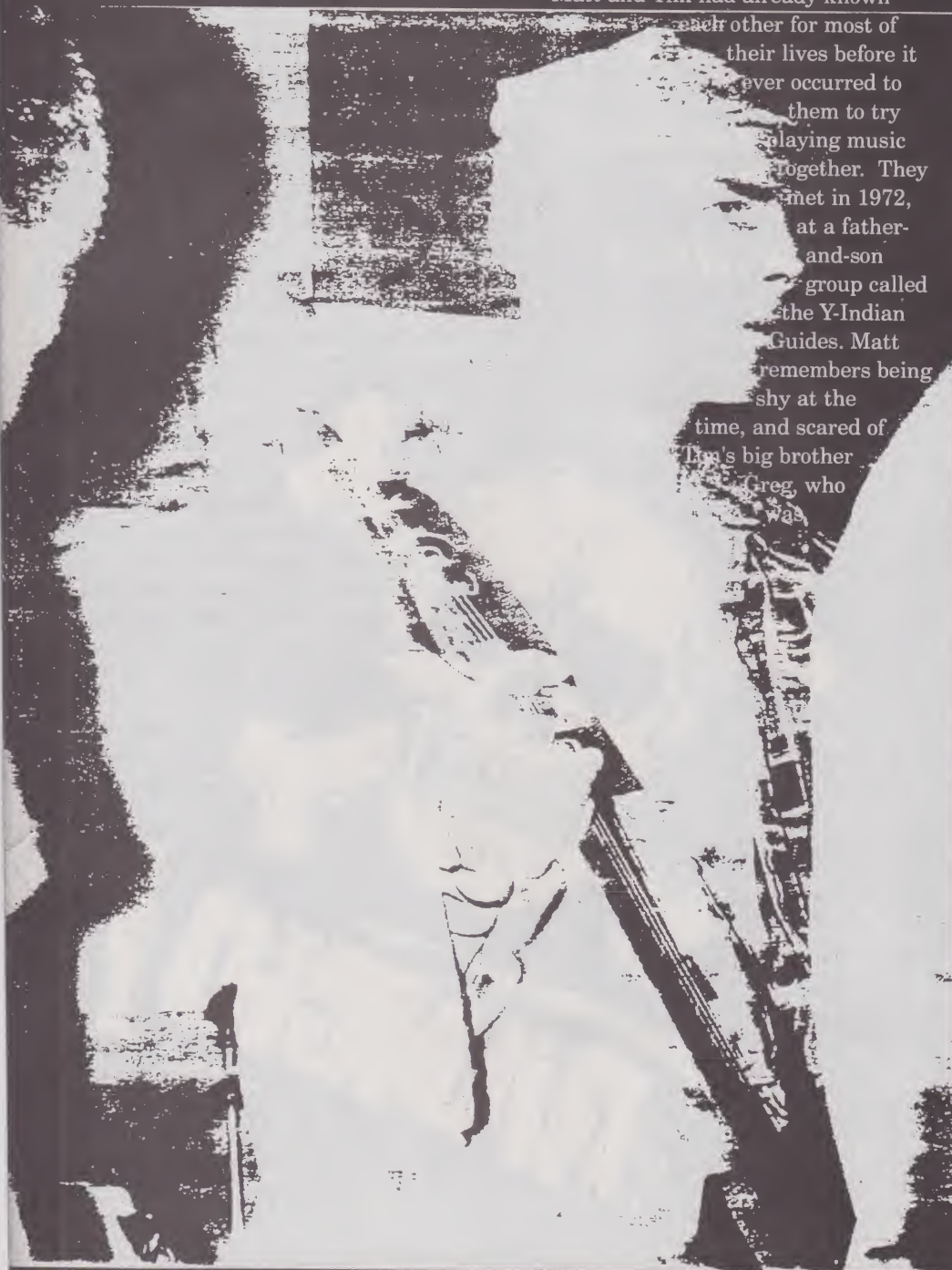
They didn't win a prize at the Cougar Follies, but it was an historic moment in that it was the first time they'd appeared on stage together. Tim had already been playing in a couple bands, first C.O.D., with his brother Greg, which he describes as, "...like...bad...um...Black Flag, Circle Jerks, Discharge," and then the Surf Rats, who were more Ramones-like.

From senior year, Matt and Tim started seriously working together to make a band happen. First it was the Noise, a band which would later mutate into Basic Radio. But progress was slow.

"We'd already been playing together a year," Tim says, recalling a band practice that hadn't gone so well, "and we'd gone upstairs, just Matt and I, with the rest of the band downstairs. And we were like, 'This is bullshit, what are we gonna fucking do?' It was our first band meeting, the first time we became a team."

Matt agrees. He can remember to this day where he was sitting as they talked. "We made a connection, like both of us are really serious, this ain't no fucking joke. We really want to play music, how are we gonna do that, how are we gonna keep things together? That was pretty much when we really knew, it was just us."

Except for a brief interruption in the early 90s, they've been playing together ever since, and even on those rare





occasions when they weren't making music, they've remained the best of friends. You get the impression that even if their musical partnership hadn't proved so successful, they'd still be inseparable. The need to belong, to be part of something, is a recurring theme with both of them.

"It wasn't like, 'We're gonna make it big in the music industry,'" Tim says about the early days of their partnership. "It was more like we were gonna make it in the sense that we were gonna be a fucking band, be a crew. I never thought about being famous or putting out a record. I just didn't think about it."

And it's a good thing they didn't have their hearts set on fame and fortune, because for the next several years neither was anywhere in sight. Basic Radio pottered along for a couple years, playing "ten or eleven shows," a mixture of parties and venues like the Berkeley Square and San Francisco's Hotel Utah. It probably wasn't the right time for a band that blended two-tone ska and punk, the mid-80s being dominated by various permutations of hair metal and thrash metal. "We didn't play metal. I don't like metal," is how Tim sums up his feelings about that.

As fate would have it, Basic Radio fell apart right about the time a new scene was emerging in the East Bay, one which would prove far more receptive. Tim filled in on bass for a while with another new band called Crimpshrine, until he was replaced by Pete Rypins, which he was "kind of disappointed about." Basic Radio recorded one last demo tape, which, as Tim says, "had actual punk rock songs, more than the reggae and ska stuff."

"One of the guys from Basic Radio wrote a letter to us and said, 'We're sick of playing lame gig contests.' They were kind of cracked that we wanted to play parties with Crimpshrine," says Tim. "And Aaron used that for the title of the Crimpshrine album. But that was the whole point, it was a lame gig contest. We were playing lame gig contests. We didn't give a fuck."

While Basic Radio was ending, something else was beginning, something that would change Matt and Tim's lives forever, something that would lead to what Tim still remembers as "two of the best years of my life." Frustrated with there never being any consistent places

for punk bands to play, a group of musicians, zinesters and scenesters found a nondescript warehouse in West Berkeley that, against all odds, they managed to turn into a volunteer-run, all-ages club known variously as The Gilman Street Project, 924 Gilman, or Gilman Street. But to those who, like Matt and Tim were there from the beginning, it would live forever as just plain "Gilman."

It wasn't just for them that Gilman would become, as a Rancid song had it many years later, "sacred ground." Nearly a decade after punk rock's obituary had been pronounced by both the mainstream and the underground, a whole new generation of punk rockers and punk rock bands came of age in the unlikely setting of Berkeley's back street, half-abandoned warehouse district.

Matt and Tim were there from the first show on December 31, 1986. Tim can barely contain his excitement talking about what it meant to him when he heard the news that a punk rock club was opening "literally blocks from where I grew up in Albany." Basic Radio may have come to an untimely end just as a place where they could have played was opening up, but "I didn't even think about playing, I just wanted to have some cool place to be...it was that fucking innocent. Does that make sense? I mean, like how hungry was the whole climate? It was like we were starving."

"To be a part of something," "a need to belong": phrases like these are almost a mantra for Matt and Tim. The two misfits who'd finally found each other in high school now hooked up with a whole tribe. It would be a rare night when one or both of them wasn't in the audience or hanging out on the sidewalk in front of the club. Matt became the club's de facto garbageman, turning up every Monday morning to haul away the weekend's debris. For each run to the Berkeley Dump, he got one free admission to a Gilman gig ("two when Isocracy played," he says, referring to an early Gilman



band renowned for bringing bags full of rubbish to their gigs and dumping them onto their fans).

Gilman had immediate effects on the East Bay punk scene, the most obvious one being an explosion of new bands. Now that there was a consistent and reliable place to play, it seemed like every kid who had ever dreamed of jumping up on stage and screaming his or her heart out was determined to do just that. The new club was especially well suited for pursuing just such a dream: while most commercial venues discouraged innovation and played it safe with formulaic thrashcore, Gilman reinvigorated the original punk ideal that anyone could - and should - play in a band.

"It was so open-minded, and a great climate to be creative and do some cool shit," Tim says. "Gilman was a climate where you could play punk rock and ska and not get moshed on. That's something you've gotta think about. The climate was right for Operation Ivy. I don't think Operation Ivy would have happened at The Farm or Ruthie's Inn."

Operation Ivy: today it's a name to conjure with, the stuff of punk rock legend, but in the early days of Gilman Street it was just a name and a gaggle of kids desperate to play. The name itself was a castoff, originally used by Isocracy, who'd found their new name (isocracy = a government of equals) while browsing through the dictionary. Operation Ivy was the code name for one of the early atomic bomb tests conducted by the USA



in the Pacific.

Matt and Tim were ready, but there were two missing links. "We needed a singer," says Tim. "At the time I was too shy. Terrified and too shy. Straight up." Enter Jesse Michaels, a North Berkeley kid who, back when he was 12 or 13, had been in a band called S.A.G. with Jeff Ott, who would go on to sing for Crimpshrine and Fifteen. Jesse had been living out east, in Pittsburgh, but

only need one."

Asked who was the enforcer of the no-double-bass rule, Matt concedes, "Probably me." Matt also conducted separate practices for the rhythm section. "We taught him that beat - four on the floor - and he practiced and worked on it. And he's also got a natural talent."

Matt had the most technical experience, and one thing he'd learned in instrumental music class back at Albany

Street, opening for MDC.

It might be stretching the term "overnight success," but within the tiny, self-contained world of Gilman, that's what Operation Ivy were. They might have been completely unknown ten miles away in San Francisco, but within months they were far and away Gilman's most popular band. Part of this may have been due to their always being ready to play on short - or no - notice.

"We did a lot of shit on the fly," Matt recalls. "Hey, there's a party, you guys wanna play?' 'Ok, great, get in the car, let's go.' Everything was real loose." Often the band wouldn't even know they were scheduled to play at Gilman until they wandered into the club and saw their name up on the board. It didn't matter, says Matt. It would be like, "We'll be here because we'll be here anyway. We just have to bring our equipment this time."

By the fall of 1987 Gilman had spawned so many bands that they were able to collaborate on a now-legendary double 7" release called "Turn It Around". Financed by *Maximum Rocknroll* and put together by Lookout Records co-founder David Hayes as a fund-raiser for Gilman, "Turn It Around" contained songs from bands like Crimpshrine, Isocracy, Rabid Lassie, No Use For A Name, Sweet Baby Jesus, Corrupted Morals, and, of course, Operation Ivy.

Kevin Army, a veteran of several Bay Area punk bands and now a fledgling engineer and producer, recorded "Turn It Around" in a marathon session at Dangerous Rhythm, his tiny 8-track studio in Oakland's Fruitvale district. Money was tight in those days, and David Hayes shepherded the bands in and out of the studio "like an assembly line," Tim remembers. Matt concurs: "It really was. You'd see the other band coming out while you were going in."

Rush job or not, the record became a classic, much sought after today by collectors. Operation Ivy's two contributions, "I Got No," and "Officer," marked the first time Matt and Tim had appeared on vinyl (CDs weren't even an issue for most punk bands in those days). In doing so, they'd already exceeded their own wildest expectations ("It was the last thing I thought would happen," Tim admits), but the real craziness was just beginning.



RANCID 1994 Photo: Michael Miller

returned to Berkeley the year Gilman got underway.

Tim remembers a conversation with Jesse at the downtown Berkeley BART station about being in a band together, where they traded ideas and possible influences: "We were like, start a band, play some punk rock, maybe a little ska, like the English Beat or the Specials, and I was like, yeah, ska and punk rock, too, like Stiff Little Fingers, the Ramones..."

All that was missing now was a drummer, and the new band found him in Dave Mello, another Albany kid who'd played in a local band called Distorted Truth. He wasn't all that experienced; asked if Dave was already a good drummer when he joined the band, Tim unhesitatingly replies, "Absolutely not." Asked what sort of drummer Dave turned out to be, he replies just as quickly: "Brilliant."

"When he first came along, he had double bass drums," Matt remembers. "And that got taken care of real quick. 'You can leave that one at home. You

High was invaluable in developing a rhythm section. "I wasn't getting the bass and drums together, I didn't really understand the concept. So my teacher made me sit with my back to the bass drum while this kid who had a heavy foot was pounding on it, and I had to play along with the bass drum while it's gouging my back. I almost...I bet I have scars. You try this in school now, I'm sure there'd be a lawsuit, some yuppie parent would go, 'What are you doing to my kid?' But my dad, even if I had complained, which I didn't, he'd say, 'Well, you've gotta learn how to play, goddamit!' So yeah, I knew about bass and drums being together from that."

Jesse was turning out lyrics that somehow managed to be both poetic and populist, personal and anthemic, and after only a couple months' practice - which, to be fair, was a couple months more than some Gilman bands bothered to practice - Operation Ivy played its first shows, one at Dave's garage in Albany, and, on the following night, at Gilman



# Operation Ivy played its first shows, one at Dave's garage in Albany, and, on the following night, at Gilman Street, opening for MDC.

Shortly after the "Turn It Around" sessions, Operation Ivy and three other bands were back at Dangerous Rhythm studios to record EPs for a new record label that David Hayes and I were starting, primarily with the aim of documenting the Gilman and East Bay scene ("Documenting" sounds a bit grandiose; another way to look at it might be that we just wanted there to be records of our friends' bands, and nobody else was prepared to do it.).

Recorded in a single day, the six-song EP "Hectic" came out in January 1988. We'd pressed a thousand copies, despite having no idea how or if we'd be able to sell them. Tim admits now, "You said you were gonna print a thousand copies, and we thought, 'Our friend is crazy.'"

Privately, I suspected the same thing, but I put up a brave front, and somehow within a month the first pressing had sold out and a second pressing was on its way to doing the same. Now that it's become commonplace for punk rock records to sell in the hundreds of thousands, sometimes even in the millions, it might seem strange for a band and a label to get excited about selling a couple thousand 7"s, but in 1988, for a new, unknown band, and an even newer, unknown label, it was a major - and totally unexpected - accomplishment.

But now it was time to see if the Gilman magic played outside the Bay Area and Northern California. Today there's a well-traveled network of independent clubs and promoters that crisscrosses North America, but not in 1988. "We were the first Gilman Street band to go on tour," Tim remembers. "So there wasn't any blueprint. No one really knew what to fucking do."

Maybe it's lucky there was no blueprint, because the tour might never have happened if somebody had bothered to tell Operation Ivy that bands toured in vans, not a 1969 Chrysler Newport. "We're taking a 20-year old car across the country," Matt says. "I'm not sure

that's something I'd try right now. But you gotta understand, we didn't even fucking think about it. We didn't have any credit cards. We didn't even have any fucking money. For the first three days we ate cheese sandwiches off the hood of the car."

Tim's dad built a box for the top of the car to carry their equipment. Matt's dad chipped in with new tires. The four members of Operation Ivy, along with David Hayes, spent the next six weeks in that car, heading first to Southern California, then all the way to the East Coast and back again. Some of the gigs were triumphant, packed with kids who already had the record and knew the lyrics by heart. Others were not so stellar. In El Paso, they played in someone's living room for three people.

"The same thing in Lexington, Kentucky," Matt

remembers. "We'd driven God knows how long through a fucking rainstorm, and we played this weird place, and there were only three or four people there, three of whom I think had just walked in, and one guy who had

our record. That was it."

Except for one night when a storm forced them to stop at a motel, the band spent every night of the tour on the floors of punk rock houses or camping out. It was a real baptism of fire for four kids in a car, who, as the song suggests, never in a million years could have seen what was coming. At the time, "that was the pinnacle," says Tim. "The highest thing we could imagine. The highest of the high. The unimaginable happened. We were on tour and we had a record."

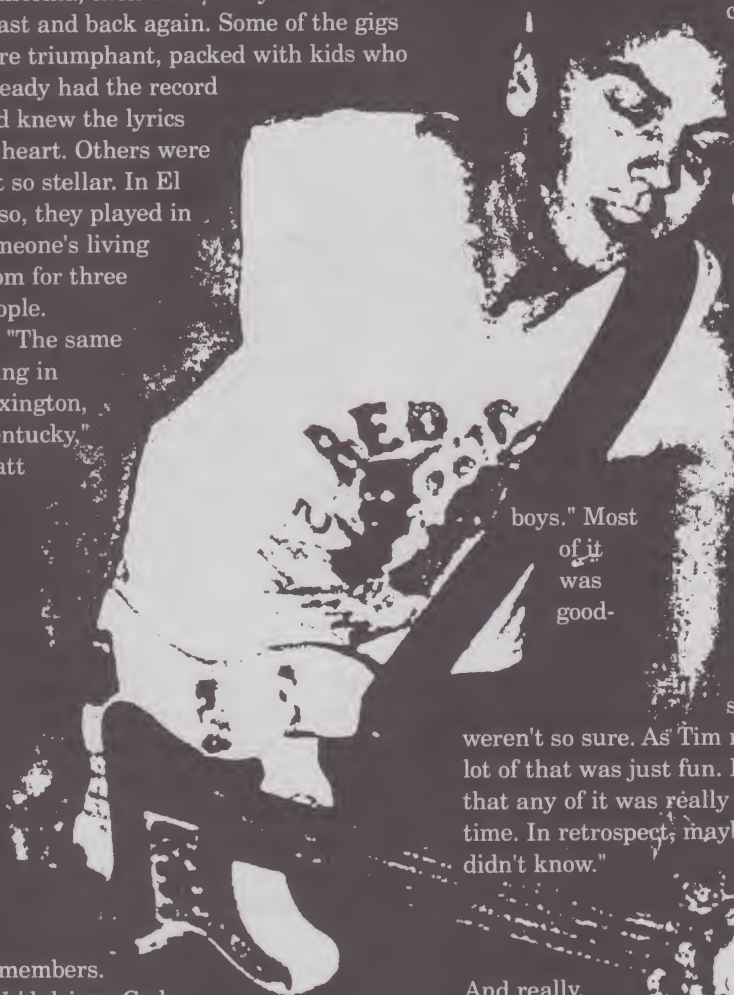
Their return to Berkeley in May of 1988 might have provided some premonition, though. Their homecoming show at Gilman was the biggest the club had ever seen. It seemed that somehow the band had doubled or tripled its popularity in the month and a half they'd been away. Kids who'd never seen Op Ivy before had come in from the suburbs to scream their heads off and dance like crazy.

Somewhere in there a backlash began: a few original Gilman scenesters started making snide remarks, heckling the band in between songs, calling them things like "ska

boys." Most of it was good-

natured, but sometimes you weren't so sure. As Tim remembers, "A lot of that was just fun. I didn't know that any of it was really serious at the time. In retrospect, maybe it was, but I didn't know."

And really, why should he have known? Or cared? As Matt puts it, "We were more seasoned, because you have to be out there on the road. We'd played a







**RANCID 1998 Photo: Lisa Johnson**

lot of shows, we were out there in a car for six weeks, you know, it toughens you up a little. We were at the top of our game."

The hecklers became a regular feature at Op Ivy's Gilman shows, but there was never more than a handful of them, and they were rarely if ever seen anywhere else. Barely pausing to rest after their return from tour, the band continued its frenetic pace, playing just about anywhere, anytime they were asked. In June they traveled up Highway 101 to Arcata, a sleepy college town on California's North Coast, where they played what amounted to a Gilman-in-exile showcase featuring Op Ivy, Crimpshrine, Isocracy and the Lookouts.

Afterwards, we sat around on the sidewalk in front of Hey Juan Burritos and discussed what was to come next. I tentatively suggested that maybe it was time to record another EP. One of them - I can't remember for sure, but I think it was Jesse - piped up, "No, we don't want to do an EP. We want to make an album."

I argued with them that it was too soon for that (if nothing else, I thought, it was too soon for Lookout to be able to come up with that kind of money). I asked David Hayes for support in this argument, but the look on his face was noncommittal; six weeks in the car with the band seemed to have persuaded him that, as Tim put it later, "You can tell Operation Ivy, but you can't tell 'em much."

That was a lesson I was to learn

many times: this was not a band that needed or wanted management of any kind. They decided everything for themselves. Sometimes it was instantaneous: you'd suggest something and the look on their faces would tell you whether or not it was going to happen; other times, it was agonizingly slow, with vague hemming and hawing covering up the fact that behind the scenes there were band meetings and arguments going on. They didn't let outsiders in on the decision-making process, and you were never quite sure how decisions were arrived at. The one thing you did know was that once a decision was reached, that was it. The band spoke as one, and there was no point in questioning it.

So, to make a long story short, there was obviously going to be an album. But the making of the album became a story in itself, one that would stretch through the following winter and well into spring. To be precise, it was a story of two albums: one that was finally released in May of 1989, and one which was never released, except as a bootleg.

The idea sounded good at first: instead of going into a normal recording studio, the band would record the basic tracks live (albeit without an audience) at Gilman with Radley Hirsch, who had been doing sound for Gilman shows since the beginning, as engineer. Radley loved Operation Ivy, and the feeling was mutual, but problems emerged. Radley had his own ideas about how to achieve the best sound, and it became

increasingly evident that those ideas were different from Operation Ivy's.

"He had me using this Marshall amp," Tim recalls, "it really wasn't my sound. I liked it really overdriven...I used a distortion box, and he didn't want me to use my distortion box."

Matt agrees: "Yeah, I remember that. And I had this big SVT, massive amp, that I would never think about using because I couldn't fit it in the fucking car. And it didn't sound like me, it sounded like Blue Cheer or something."

The recording dragged on for what seemed like forever. The band that had knocked out a six-song EP in one afternoon was now spending weeks on a single song. "None of us seemed to be happy," says Tim. "I know Jesse wasn't happy." The album that was supposed to be virtually live was becoming layered with overdubs. "Remember doing a snare drum overdub?" Tim asks, a look of mingled amazement and horror clouding his face.

"It was just all disjointed, and it wasn't coming together," says Matt. Work finally ground to a complete halt. "It was hard," says Tim, "but at the time we thought we'd rather not make a record if it doesn't feel right. And then I remember David Hayes came up and asked, 'Are you guys gonna make a record or not?' And we said, 'Uh...' So we had a band meeting and said, 'Are we gonna make a record? Ok, we will.' We almost didn't make a fucking record."

Radley had to be told he was out as



engineer, and that wasn't easy. Work then started from scratch on the album that would become known as "Energy", would go on to sell well over half a million copies, and can be credited (or blamed, depending on your feelings) for inspiring a whole generation of American ska-punk bands.

After months of stopping and starting with Radley, the band went into San Francisco's Sound and Vision studio with Kevin Army and knocked out a 19-song album in less than a week. "We did the basics in one day, says Tim, "bass drums and guitar. Wow. Nineteen songs."

"It was a live recording," according to Matt, "because we went in there and we just went down the list. We weren't really taking breaks at all. At one point - I remember this very specifically - we were really hungry and wanted to eat,

front to the world. There was none of the usual backbiting or accusations you expect to hear when a band splits up, just a quiet, dignified announcement that Operation Ivy was to be no more. Rumors abounded, but facts were thin on the ground.

"It sort of wasn't that fun anymore," Matt says now. "It was a little more... too serious or something. I mean, we always took it seriously, we loved to play and everything, but it was almost like people started taking it a little more seriously than they should have."

"We decided we didn't want to do it anymore," says Tim. "I remember me and Jesse, we were on Telegraph, I was buying him some beer, and we went to Cloyne Court. There was an old volleyball court, and we sat there. Me and him talked about how the band

hand, into big business. Sweet Baby (formerly Sweet Baby Jesus), one of the bands from the "Turn It Around" compilation, became the first Gilman band to sign to a major label. There would be more.

It was as if someone had opened a door to the East Bay, shone a light on it, and, as someone once said about the California Gold Rush, "the world rushed in." It was a trickle at first, but kids were starting to show up in Berkeley from all over the country, chasing some dream they'd heard about on records or read about in fanzines, and which all too often had little in common with the gritty reality of the East Bay streets.

"This is a Mecca," says a character in "Journey To The End Of The East Bay." "This ain't no Mecca, man," Tim growls back, "this place is fucked."

It didn't happen all at once. The shows continued to get bigger, the kids kept coming, kept buying the records, kept starting new bands, going through all the familiar motions, but something had changed. Tim points to the temporary closing of Gilman in late 1988 as the beginning of the end.

*Maximum Rocknroll's* Tim Yohannan, who had backed the club from the start with money, work, and unstinting devotion, had grown dissatisfied with where he saw Gilman heading and decided to pull the plug. Everyone assumed that was the end, and it was a complete surprise when an ad hoc group managed to raise enough money to reopen the club, henceforth technically known as "924 Gilman." It's still there today, still completely non-profit, completely volunteer-run, one of the world's longest-running (and few working) examples of anarchist principles in action.

On the surface, not all that much had changed. But as Tim remembers it, "In '89 it stopped being fun for me. Personally. It kinda changed. It wasn't like that family vibe anymore. I thought the energy kind of got darker."

Tim's own world was growing darker as well, as he began to sink into what would become a disastrous drinking problem. Alcohol had already played a large role in Tim's life - "My dad was a drunk, my dad was drunk and crazy," he acknowledges - and that role was about to get a lot larger.

It crept up on him almost

## Long before Operation Ivy took the stage, it had become impossible to keep track of the doors or to stop people from cramming their way in.

and it was like, 'No, let's just finish it.' And we just did it. We didn't want to slow down, we just wanted to get it done. Because we were on a roll."

The album had taken so long that one of the lyrics, to the song "Freezeup," had to be changed from, "It's 1988, stand up and take a look around..." to "It's 1989..." But it was finally done, and a record release party was scheduled for May 28 at Gilman.

Before May 28 rolled around, however, the celebration had become a wake. A few weeks earlier, Operation Ivy imploded, and shocked nearly everyone by announcing that the show would be their last (technically, it wasn't quite; there was to be one more unannounced show the following day in Robert Eggplant's backyard in Pinole). Almost nobody had seen the split coming except, of course, the band members themselves.

Just exactly what went on behind the scenes remains shrouded in some mystery even to this day. Even in breaking up, the band showed a united

wasn't really what it was when it started. It was like a mutual thing. That's one thing that's not usually told, it wasn't like he quit, it was like, 'Yeah, we're not really into it anymore.'"

Nobody knows how many people were at that last Gilman show. Long before Operation Ivy took the stage, it had become impossible to keep track of the doors or to stop people from cramming their way in. Gilman's legal capacity is 300; paid admissions were more than twice that, and a reasonable estimate might be that a thousand people somehow shoehorned themselves into the tiny warehouse. Other bands on the bill were the Lookouts, Crimpshrine (in what turned out to be their last show as well), Surrogate Brains, and, playing first, a young band who'd just put out their first 7", Green Day.

Times were changing, both at Gilman and in the punk rock world in general. What was once rebellion, as an Op Ivy lyric had it, was turning on one hand into just another social sect, and on the other



unnoticed, because everyone around him was drinking in those days, but an early sign of trouble came when Tim's drinking sometimes interfered with the recording sessions for Op Ivy's album. "A lot of times with Radley, I remember, I'd get drunk. One time he came to pick me up and I was too fucking drunk to record. That's something that should be told."

Around that same time, Operation Ivy played a show at San Francisco's Covered Wagon Saloon, a rare event in those days, when upstart East Bay bands were usually given short shrift by their supposedly more sophisticated Frisco cousins. Word had filtered across the Bay, however, and the place was packed with big city hipsters curious to see what the hype was all about.

The band didn't give a good account of itself, though, owing almost entirely to

## In and out of detox, disappearing for days or weeks at a time, malnourished and broke, Tim looked to be headed for a premature and tragic demise.

the people you'd known who were dead from drugs and alcohol. That was an amazing thing, to have someone be that honest with me. I could go to the Covered Wagon right now and tell you where we were standing."

If I'm going to be perfectly honest about it myself, I'd have to admit that at least part of my anger was about feeling humiliated: after bragging to all my

know what I mean? It was the first time I'd heard somebody say that to me."

That talk had an impact on Tim, but it wasn't enough. Things would get a lot worse before they got better. It was becoming obvious that drinking might be the one fatal obstacle to Tim's lifelong dream of playing music.

"Between '89, when Op Ivy broke up, and through the Downfall and the Generator years, I was hospitalized three times for alcohol and drug abuse. One time I almost died. My brother Jeff ran into me on Telegraph Avenue, and I had a 3.9 alcohol level [Author's note: nearly five times the level required to convict someone of drunk driving, and sometimes enough to be fatal.] I was passed out in his car, and they took me to the doctor, and the doctor said, 'Your brother is trying to kill himself.'"

In and out of detox, disappearing for days or weeks at a time, malnourished and broke, Tim looked to be headed for a premature and tragic demise. But a few people stuck by him, most notably Matt, who had to bear the brunt of Tim's descent into madness, driving him to detox centers, rescuing him from one predicament after another, even giving him money for food, until he discovered that any money would almost surely be spent on more of the booze that was slowly but surely killing his best friend.

"It got to the point of, 'What are you going to use it for? Are you going to buy booze with it?' And he'd be like, 'No, I'm hungry,' and I'd be like, 'Ok, fine, let's go get something to eat.'" Ultimately, Matt had to take the most drastic step of all: he stopped playing music with Tim, broke up the partnership that had meant everything to him and that had brought him most of the success and happiness he had known.

Before things reached that point, though, Matt and Tim had managed to collaborate on a few other projects. The most well-known of them was Downfall,



RANCID 1994 Photo: Lisa Johnson

Tim's being so drunk he had trouble standing up, let alone playing. Tim admits as much: "I'd been drinking up on Telegraph all day, I drank on the roof of Barrington Hall with some of the kids. I was so annihilated I could barely put the chords together. It was a mess, all right. It was bad."

After the gig, Tim and I had a conversation on the sidewalk in front of the Covered Wagon. I was furious, and told him so. Drunk or not, it made an impression on Tim: "You told me that my drinking wasn't cute anymore. I remember you were referencing a lot of

friends about great Operation Ivy was, they'd embarrassed themselves and, I thought, me. But I was angry about something else, too, and that's what seemed to connect with Tim.

"How dare you," I asked again and again, "take the talent and the opportunities you've got now and piss them away just for the sake of getting drunk. 'Millions of kids would give anything to have your talent, and you're just throwing it away like it was some kind of bad joke.'"

"Yeah," Tim remembers now, "but I didn't think I had potential or talent,





**RANCID 1994 Photo: Jesse Fisher**  
new side thing with his old friend."

Matt agrees; no matter how much he wanted this new band and this old partnership, Tim had to prove himself first. But "after that year was up, I cut the Gr'ups off faster than...I never looked back. 'Ok, that's the end. Sorry. Bye bye.'"

Something else totally unexpected had happened during the year that Rancid was taking shape: money started coming in from the Operation Ivy CD that had finally been released in 1991, almost two years after the band had broken up. Why did it take two years? Well, even though Op Ivy was long gone, the members still insisted on working everything out the way they always had, through band meetings and consensus, both of which are even harder to achieve when a band no longer exists.

Tim was living in a punk rock house that cost him only \$100 a month, so even though the Op Ivy money was not much at first, it felt like Christmas had arrived early. "Out of the blue...I was blessed. I was sober. For the first time in my life I had enough money to take care of myself and write music. Matt was in the Gr'ups, it didn't matter, it was like all I wanted to do was be sober and hang out with my best friend again."

They recruited Brett Reed to play drums for Rancid. Brett was "a skater punk rock kid," according to Tim, "a sarcastic skater kid. He could barely play drums at first, just like Dave Mello, but he got good. He liked fast music and he was a match made in...a perfect match."

Some people might have mistaken — or wanted to mistake — Downfall for another version of Operation Ivy, but Matt and Tim were determined not to let that happen with Rancid. "Look, Rancid ain't no Operation Ivy, don't get your hopes up," Tim would tell anyone who asked. "And we don't play ska," Matt would add for good measure.

That would change later, but at first Rancid was just straight ahead hard-edged punk rock. "That's what I was feeling," says Tim, "I was sober. All this anger and frustration, I put it into my music."

If it sounds a bit like getting back to basics, it was, right down to the kind of gigs the new band played. Once again it was parties and Gilman Street, starting all over at the beginning. On Sunday nights the band practiced at Gilman, but

which many Gilman scenesters insisted on seeing as Operation Ivy Part 2, probably because the band played ska-punk and contained three out of Op Ivy's four members. But the similarities were mostly superficial, and there was one major difference: Tim was now singing as well as playing guitar. His style was radically different from Jesse's, more urban and soul-inflected, a foreshadowing of what was to come in Rancid.

But although Downfall played some rapturously received shows and recorded some songs, two of which appeared on compilations and the rest making up a legendary lost album which has been much bootlegged but never released, the band never looked like lasting long. "Just how Op Ivy didn't feel right at the end," Tim says, Downfall didn't feel right either. Not even at the beginning."

The fans may have wanted Downfall to be the new Op Ivy, but it was never about that for Matt and Tim. "It was never supposed to replace Op Ivy, it was just to keep playing music," Tim says. "As soon as we had the first chance to break it up or stop it, we took that opportunity."

That opportunity came when Matt was invited to join MDC, long one of his favorite bands. It would be the first time in years that Matt and Tim were no longer playing music together, but the partnership wasn't completely dissolved: when MDC set out on tour, Matt took Tim along as his roadie. There were other, even more short-lived attempts at

playing together, a purely ska band called Shaken 69, and an almost metal-tinged punk group named Generator, but when Matt followed up his tenure in MDC by joining the Gr'ups, a new band being put together by Jesse Blatz and Kamala Karnavore, it looked as though the Matt and Tim story — the musical part of it, anyway — might have reached an end.

Matt, after all, was getting on with his life, playing shows, going on tour, while Tim seemed to have hit rock bottom. Even his mother wouldn't let him stay at her house anymore, and he wound up in a Salvation Army shelter, working for them in exchange for a bed. "A humiliating place," he says, "but I really had nowhere else to go." Nowhere, that was, but up: for some reason, somehow, it was at that point that Tim found the strength not to drink anymore.

Matt was happy, but still wary. "As weeks and months went by, Tim was not drinking and not drinking, but I was still waiting for that phone call, you know..." It wasn't that he didn't want to have faith in his friend — "There was nothing I wanted more than for that fucking thing to work out," he says — but after all he'd been through, he wasn't about to rush into anything.

The guys had started jamming together with an idea of putting together the band that would become Rancid, but as Tim tells it, "It took me a year after the Salvation Army before Matt would commit to Rancid. See, the Gr'ups were like his real band, and Rancid was this



in exchange they had to clean the toilets. "Those toilets were the most disgusting things ever," Matt says with a grimace, "I thought being the garbage man was hard."

At the end of 1992 they recorded ten songs, five of which wound up on their debut EP on Lookout. They switched to Epitaph for their first album, and stayed there until Tim started his own label, Hellcat Records, which he operates in partnership with Epitaph. While they were getting ready to record their second album, they decided to expand to a four-piece by adding another guitarist.

The first guy to try out for the job, Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day, played a Gilman show with Rancid, and although it worked well ("It was rad, it was great," says Matt), Billie, as Tim puts it, "had other things going on...another band he was doing pretty well with."

But then Lars Frederiksen came along. A feisty 19-year old from the South Bay who'd already put in a stint with Charlie Harper's UK Subs (Lars remembers it as being like going "on tour with my dad"), he was already a fan of Matt and Tim's work. "See, in the South Bay," he says, the only band from the Gilman scene to have any sort of cred was Operation Ivy," and the minute he heard Rancid he was hooked.

"I remember getting the record, getting the tape...I put the record on first, and I went, oh God, this is

what I've been waiting for my whole life. Everybody wanted to be fucking Fugazi, all those fucking emo kids. There were no punk rockers anymore, it seemed like that to me. And I'm thinking, this is a fucking reaction to that, this is saying fuck you to all that, this is fucking real."

Lars and Tim met at - where else? - Gilman Street on a night when both their bands were playing. Tim remembers dropping a broad hint for Lars, telling him, "If your band breaks up..." As fate would have it, Lars' band was in the middle of doing just that. Lars locked himself in his brother's bedroom with a Rancid tape and a boombox and learned the songs backward and forward. When he showed up for his first Rancid practice, Tim says, "I think he knew the songs better than we did."

There was just one hitch. When Tim first talked to Lars about possibly joining the band, he'd asked him if he drank. Lars told him, "I just drink beer now and then, a little bit of beer." And Tim thought, "Well, our bass player has a few beers now and then too, that's perfect."

But "a few beers" can mean many different things, depending on who's doing the counting. Lars had been part of a South Bay crew called Skunks, which stood for Skins, Punks and Drunks, and their style of drinking didn't involve sitting around with the guys having a beer or two after work. "The kind of

friends I would drink with," Lars says, "we would just hit each other out of the blue. If I ever got emotional, they would gang up on me. So what I had to do, I had to find the biggest guy at the party and try to fight him. I was just the crazy guy who tried to pick a fight with the big guy. Just to impress them..."

"I thought that was peculiar," says Tim.

"That was the weird red flag," Matt agrees.

None of this was evident at first, but it became painfully obvious after the first Rancid practice with Lars. "Comes the end of the night," Matt remembers, "I said, 'Wanna go get a couple beers?' I was gonna hang out with him, just spend some Matt and Lars time."

They headed to a Mexican restaurant, then to Jesse Blatz's house, just down the street from Gilman. At both places Lars got through two or three times as much beer as anybody else. "And Lars got very..." Matt searches for a tactful phrase. "Let's just say he's a very outspoken person. And I saw

some interesting things which not only embarrassed me in front of my friends, but made me angrier and angrier. In retrospect, I just turned into Hannibal Lecter, and I'm thinking, 'You are not going to be in my band.' I'm just having visions of, you know, ripping his



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tongue out."

Worse was to come. Matt and Lars set off for the Berkeley Square, where they were meant to meet up with Tim and Brett. By the time they'd gotten there, Matt was trying to figure out how to drop Lars off without being seen and make a getaway back to his friends' house. "Who were less than impressed," Matt adds.

Now it was Tim's turn. "He shows up at the Berkeley Square, and I'd never seen him drunk, but he was fucking annihilated. The first thing that caught me off guard was him putting his arm around this guy Joe, from San Jose, and Joe looking terrified, like he was about to cry. And I was thinking, 'What's wrong with this picture?'"

After the gig - featuring, incidentally, Green Day and Tilt - some 600 kids spilled out into University Avenue, and Lars was the center of attention. "All heads were turned," says Tim, "watching him, like it was 'The Lars Show.' And he pulls out his dick and starts pissing in front of everybody, just shooting piss out...Kids were like, 'What's this? What's going on here?' Then he asked this young lady to put his dick back in his pants for him."

Tim led Lars away, and the next morning gave him the money to get back to San Jose. That should have been the end of the story except for one thing: during the gig, hanging out backstage, the two had a heart-to-heart talk in which Lars had admitted, "Man, everything's fucked up. I gotta quit drinking."

"It was kind of touching," Tim says. "Then I said, 'Well, Lars, you know, I don't drink. You could not drink, like me, but it's a lot of work. But you've got a problem...'"

Matt wasn't quite as understanding. "Fuck that guy, no fucking way," was the way he put it. "He ain't in my fucking band."

Tim insisted that they give him a

chance. "If he gets drunk one time, he's out of the band. But if he nails it, if he gets sober...You know, he reached out to me. We can't kick him out now."

Matt still wasn't convinced. "I thought, fuck him, let him get sober somewhere else. I'm very sorry about it, but no, I'm not going through it again." But Tim carried the day, arguing that the chances of Lars staying sober might be slim, but it was worth a try. "So maybe it was a leap of faith," Matt says now, "but I've always trusted Tim. But it was also a deal, it wasn't like Tim was signing on this guy that we'd stick with him no matter what. If he drinks, he's out."

He never drank again, though there were some rough moments. "Lars is having a hard time," Tim remembers, "and he was asking, 'Why can't I just have a fuckin' beer? Why can't I just fuckin' drink?' And I said, 'Well, grab your amp and guitar. If you're drinking, that's cool. And we'll drop your equipment off at Togo's for you.' That's where he used work, making sandwiches, before he joined Rancid."

"That gave me a lot of clarity," says Lars, "because then I knew there was a boundary. See, I didn't know what the fuck to do. I really wanted to be in a band, and I really wanted to drink. But I gotta go back to this: see, these were the greatest songs I had ever heard, the best band I'd ever heard." And, as Lars' brother had put it the first time he heard him playing along with the Rancid tape, "If you don't join this band, you're a fuckin' asshole."

Lars lived up to his end of the bargain and Rancid lived up to theirs. It was outside of Klub Komotion, Lars remembers, after a show with Citizen Fish. "Matt came up to me and said, 'Congratulations, you're in the band.' I tried to give him a hug, and he's like, 'Aggggh, get out of here, you're in the band, OK?!?!?'"

Lars would bring more to the band

than his songwriting and performing abilities. "It was a cool thing with us," says Tim, "Like when we started, we were below the radar. But then Lars was in the band, and the record came out on Epitaph, and we started getting more attention. And Lars was so good, he's so tough and thick-skinned, he was the best guy to have around when there was a problem or a drama."

Drama aplenty was on its way. By the end of 1994, punk rock had exploded onto the commercial scene. Both Green Day and the Offspring had multiplatinum records, and many people were tipping Rancid to be the Next Big Thing. Their video for the song "Salvation" started getting played on MTV, and suddenly everybody was waving record contracts at them. Even Madonna got in on the act, turning up at Rancid's New York City show, and asking them if they'd be interested in signing to her new label.

Rumors were flying about where the new Rancid album would come out, and the main betting was on Sony. What almost no one anticipated - except for those who knew the band best - was that it would be on Epitaph, the same independent label they'd been with since their first album. Tim explains: "Ultimately, we decided it would be dumb not to stay with [Epitaph owner and president] Brett Gurewitz, a real record guy, a punk rock record guy. Madonna's cool, but she's an international superstar. She's not a punk rock record guy. That's what we need."

The band are not saying just how much money they turned down from the major labels in order to stay with Epitaph, but given the amounts being tossed around in the heady days of '94 and '95 at anything vaguely resembling a punk rock band, you can bet it was a lot. In the long run, of course, sticking with Epitaph was not just good ethics, it was good business: indie labels, the well-run ones, anyway, pay their artists a higher royalty rate and give them far more control over their music and art. Rancid have no regrets at all about their choice.

"...And Out Come The Wolves", Rancid's third - and, many say, greatest - album came out in 1995. An intoxicating mix of ska and punk, full of singalong anthems, and with Lars doing lead vocals on several of his own songs, it was the second punk rock record - the Offspring's being the first - to sell over a million



copies on an independent label. By now the band was locked into an almost non-stop round of touring and recording that had started back in 1993 and was to last nearly to the end of 1996.

"We were gone so much, we'd come home for maybe ten days at the most," Matt remembers. "There was always something to do, and then all of a sudden it's like Martin Sheen at the beginning of 'Apocalypse Now', looking out my blinds, smoking a cigarette, going, 'Berkeley...Every time I was out there, I wished I was home, every time I was home I wished I was out there.' I mean, I was doing the fuckin' drunk dance, punching the fuckin' mirror."

Rancid had become a smoothly-oiled touring and recording machine. They knew how to keep it going, how to keep up the energy night after night; what they maybe didn't know was how to switch it off, how to cool down and relax. It was in 1996, when the band finally took an extended break, that Tim had his first and only relapse into drinking.

The first time around, it took him years to hit rock bottom; this time he managed it in five days. "We stopped touring," he says, "We were always touring. Then we stopped, and I drank. You guys weren't around, and I was in limbo. I still lived at the punk rock house, I just didn't feel satisfied...It was like, 'What do I do now?'"

He acknowledges that it was "hell of stupid." Matt rushed down to Los Angeles as soon as he heard the news, and Mike Ness, of Social Distortion fame, came to help look after Tim as well. "He picked me up out of the dirt, put me to bed. It was humiliating, to have Mike Ness put you in bed. Plus I was eating dirt. I fell in the dirt, I was so drunk. I mean, that's humiliating to go down that quick again. It's not romantic at all."

Ness, who'd had his own misadventures with alcohol before getting sober, gave Tim some advice which he's continued to heed ever since: "You drink like this and you're gonna die, or do something stupid where you'll end up in jail and probably die."

It shouldn't have been surprising that the band had to make adjustments in both their personal and professional lives; if anything, it's surprising that the transition was as smooth as it was. When Rancid started on its nearly non-stop campaign of touring and recording, all

## They knew how to keep it going, how to keep up the energy night after night; what they maybe didn't know was how to switch it off...

four members were eking out a marginal, punk rock existence. When they finally took a break in 1996, everything had changed, not least their personal situations.

With a platinum album under their belts, earning a living was no longer the issue it had once been. Lars remembers the heady feeling back when they were getting ready to record their second album, when Matt and Tim pooled their limited resources to provide him with enough money so that he could quit his job at Tower Records and concentrate on music.

"Rancid came and picked me up. I thought I was in trouble, I thought I'd fucked up again." "I think Lars was sometimes terrified when he saw me and Tim," Matt laughs. "He thought it would be like, 'Get in the van. We're going for a ride. Togo's.' He's looking over his shoulder like it was a mob hit."

Lars was thinking, "Oh God, what did I do? And they go, 'Look, we think you're gonna have to quit that job, because we don't know if you're gonna be able to make the record if you're working at night. We've got some money here, we're gonna give you some money so you don't have to work while we make the record.' And I thought it was the end of the world. It finally hit me that these guys would go to any length for me."

Matt and Tim followed that up by cutting Lars in for an equal share of the royalties from the first record, even though he hadn't played on it. "You're part of the band, you're here, you're doing this," he was told. "So we cut things four ways down the middle," Tim adds.

That's not something you find in most bands, where one or two guys always seem to end up as first among equals in terms of both prestige and how they get paid. But Rancid are not like most bands, and in no way is this more obvious than the way they hang together. A typical

band, by the time it's been together a few years and has had some success, tends to become a bit like a job for its members. They show up when it's time to work, i.e., go on tour or make a record, and then head back home to friends and families when the work's done.

With Rancid, it's just the opposite: even when the band is supposedly "on a break," they're constantly hanging out together, not out of some sense of obligation or band loyalty, but because they genuinely enjoy each other's company. To tell the truth, there's probably no such thing anymore as Rancid being "on a break," because whether they're just shooting the shit, or listening to music, or jamming with each other, new songs and new ideas are always taking shape. Being in Rancid is obviously about more than just being in a band, it's a way of life, and it goes on 24-7.

That's not to say that the work never stops; it's more like the line between work and play has become so blurred that it no longer exists. More than ever before, Rancid don't have to do anything they don't want to or that doesn't feel right. In ways that would have seemed unimaginable to them ten or twenty years ago, it really is just about playing music now for Matt, Tim, and Lars.

"Life Won't Wait", Rancid's fourth album, marked a significant departure, not only in the greater diversity of the music on it, but in the way it was made. "It's an aggregate of about five different sessions," Tim explains. "It wasn't like we spent six months on a song, it was like go in and knock out a bunch of songs, a few months later knock out some more songs, and before we knew it, we had a lot of songs. Still do, some that have never been heard."

Another thing that set "Life Won't Wait" from its predecessors was that it didn't sell nearly as well. "It was probably our least popular record," says



Tim. Did that bother them? "Nah, it didn't. It was kind of a relief, took the pressure off us. Everybody's noticed that, too. 'You guys seem so relaxed.'"

For Lars, "Life Won't Wait" was "personally, the most gratifying. It was like everything that we'd ever listened to. We played music, and all we ever wanted to do was play music, we made this musical record..." Was this, then, a record Rancid made for themselves rather than for the fans?

"I would think," Lars responds, "that we went into every record making the records we wanted to hear."

"That's a better way to put it," agrees Tim. "We didn't make the first one for our fans, we didn't have any fans back when we made our first record. It was the record we wanted to hear at the time."

"I think that's us with every record," Lars continues. "We make the record we want to hear. And whether people like it or not, we never really gave a shit. Because we never gave a shit to begin with. Nobody ever thought...I remember when the whole punk rock thing started getting big, Tim looked at me one day and said, 'Man, if somebody told me ten years ago that punk rock was gonna be this big, I would have said you're out of your fuckin' mind.'"

If any further evidence were needed that Rancid make the record they want to hear at a given time rather than the one they think will sell, you need look no further than their most recent, self-titled album. Not a ska song in sight, it's straight-ahead, back-to-basics punk, stripped down to the barest essentials and sounding a bit like Rancid did when it all began.

"We just knocked it out," says Tim. "Really punk rock style. It was really fun for us, and exciting to play. I love playing that shit. It's one of my favorite records we ever made."

What happens next? It's too soon to be thinking - at least out loud - about a sixth record, but you get the feeling there will almost certainly be one. In the meantime, Tim keeps busy with songwriting, musical side projects, and running his Hellcat record label, which has become almost a whole new career in itself. Along with Lars and Matt, he's also taken on the responsibility for Operation Ivy and Rancid merchandise, which could be yet another career.



RANCID 1998 Photo: Lisa Johnson

But somehow none of it seems like a job at all, more like a bunch of guys who are the best of friends and would be hanging out together anyway, and somehow while they're hanging out, all this stuff gets done. The togetherness, the close-knittedness, the fierce mutual loyalty - "You fuck with one of us, you fuck with us all," as Lars puts it - has, however, led to rumors and accusations about Rancid having a gang-like mentality.

Adding fuel to the flames were stories about the US Thugs, who, depending on who you listened to were either a genuine gang or a harmless crew. There were tales to the effect that if you talked shit about Rancid, you were liable to have an unpleasant encounter with the US Thugs, but all three band members vehemently deny any such thing ever happened.

According to Lars, the US Thugs were "a crew...Like five people, just friends, and along the way it got blown out of proportion. I remember hearing, 'You guys are doing drive-bys,' and I'm like, 'What??' You know, we're just a fucking crew!"

Part of the problem might have been that other people started getting the US Thugs tattoo, and then in turn had their actions and attitudes represented as being part of some monolithic entity. "There are a lot of people who get the tattoo, but it's nothing really official," says Tim. "The only gang I'm in is Rancid. That's my gang, my family."

Lars thinks that many of the rumors stem from jealousy, pure and simple. "It's kinda like this...I know from my own experience that when you're not part of something, you make up shit, you throw rocks at it. It's like the girl you liked in grade school. You threw rocks at her, but you really liked her."

"It's fabrications," Tim agrees. "People talk a lot, people say whatever they want about us. We don't have to be friends with people that make up stories about us, but no one's gonna get beat up."

I'll admit it's hard for me personally to imagine the guys from Rancid going on beat-down missions. Maybe that's because I've known them personally for so long and they've never - even when we've had disagreements about specific issues - been anything but sweet and



# The music tells the story far better than I could anyway, and the thing about music - the thing that makes people see it as verging on the realms of the sacred - is that while stories all have to end eventually, the music goes on forever.

respectful with me. But even more so, it just wouldn't make sense: why, when you've got virtually everything going for you, when you get to devote your whole life to making music and hanging out with your friends, would you even care what other people said or thought about you?

As Tim puts it, "By the time Rancid got going, we were over worrying about people talking shit. We just said fuck it. We didn't give a fuck what people said about us. That's the irony of the situation. We could give a fuck."

Maybe the real irony of the situation, though, is that they've gotten where they have by caring so much. Not about

would become the focal point of their lives for ever after.

It's funny how these things turn out. Chance encounters and twists of fate can loom just as large as musical talent or a fierce determination to shine, to count for something in a world that most of the time just doesn't want to know. You can wonder about what Operation Ivy would have become, or if it would have even existed, if Gilman wasn't there, or you can wonder if Gilman would have become so famous and gone on for all these years if it weren't for Operation Ivy.

What if Matt hadn't been so loyal to Tim, if he'd given up on him when Tim was a down-and-out drunk? What if Lars had slipped up just once during that first

year, started drinking again, and Rancid had followed through on their threat to send him back to Togo's? Following through on your dreams, working like crazy to make those dreams become a reality, is always a fragile business, one that involves more stumbles and pratfalls than triumphs and epiphanies.

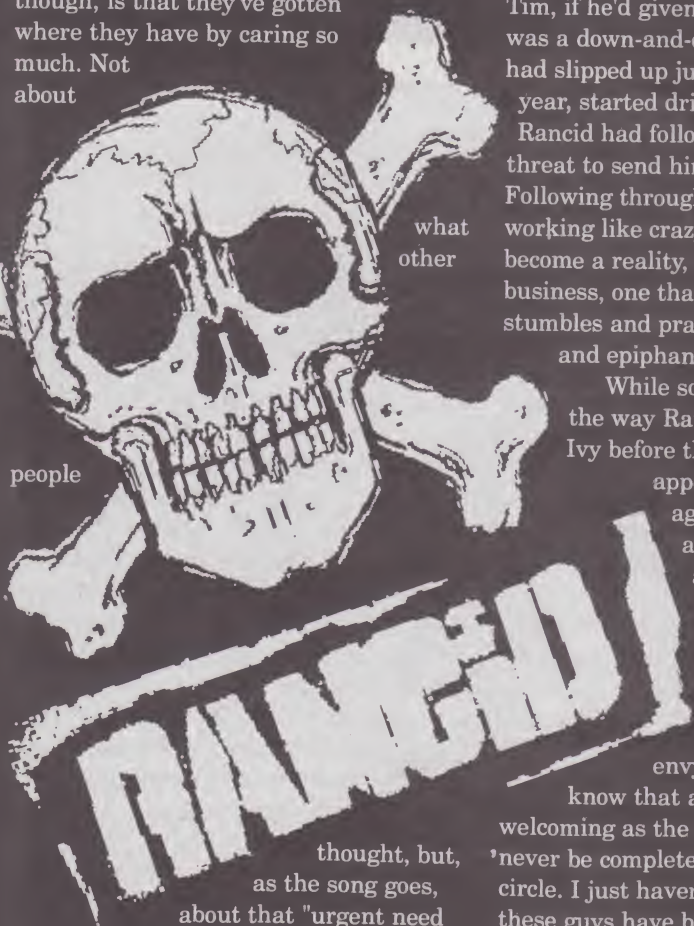
While some may find fault with the way Rancid - and Operation Ivy before them - sometimes appeared to have an "us against the world" attitude, it was an attitude that was a) understandable; and b) probably their saving grace. As Lars suggested, there's probably a degree of envy from outsiders. I

know that as nice, as friendly, and welcoming as the guys are to me, I could never be completely a part of the inner circle. I just haven't been through what these guys have been through together. Not to mention the fact that I can't play an instrument half as well as any of them, but that's another story...

The real essence of this story, though - and it's one I'm always a sucker for - is some guys from not especially distinguished backgrounds, without all that much going for them, getting together, working hard, sticking with it, maybe getting a few breaks, but never missing the chance to make the most of those breaks, and, most of all, never losing sight of what really matters, what's really going to get them where they want to be. It's not an especially glamorous story, even when you've got people like Madonna coming round to chat you up, and it's far from the nonstop round of parties and celebrities that aspiring teenage rock stars practicing air guitar in their bedrooms might fantasize about. In fact, it's mostly hard work and determination, long rides in the back of a car or a van, scraping by for years on not much more than cheese sandwiches and hope.

I'd like to tell you that I knew all along it would work out for these guys, but I'd be lying if I did. I knew from the start that they had a phenomenal talent, but I'd already lived long enough to know that phenomenal talent in itself is no guarantee of anything. Whatever it was that kept Matt and Tim together through all those years, all those bands, all those times both bad and good, is something I can only speculate on.

But I'm not even going to bother speculating. In fact I'm not going to try and say anything more about it, because I'm just a witness, just somebody who happened to be there, was lucky enough to be there when it all started happening. The music tells the story far better than I could anyway, and the thing about music - the thing that makes people see it as verging on the realms of the sacred - is that while stories all have to end eventually, the music goes on forever. +



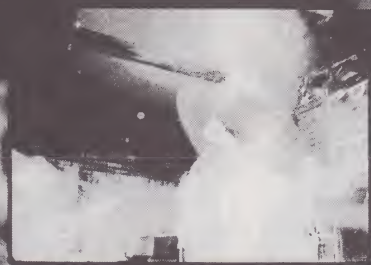
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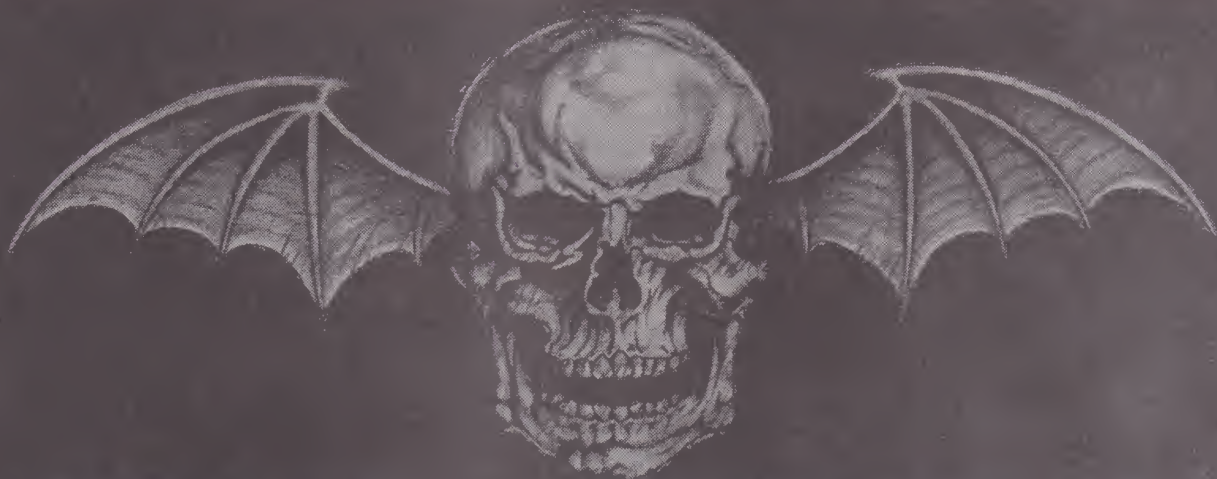
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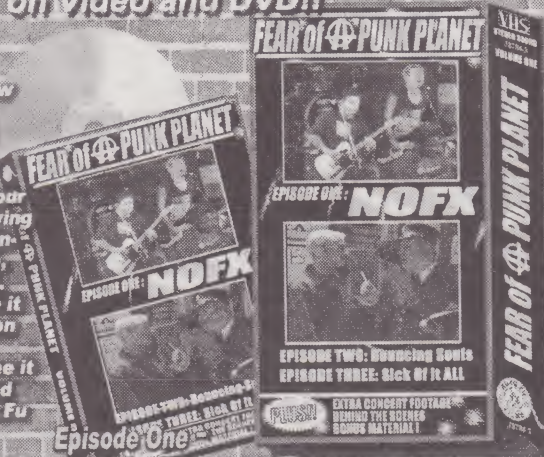
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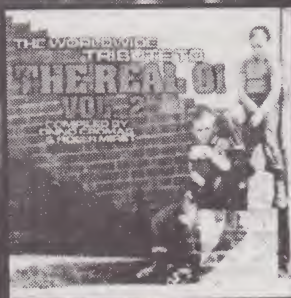
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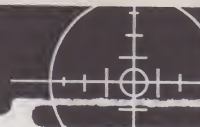
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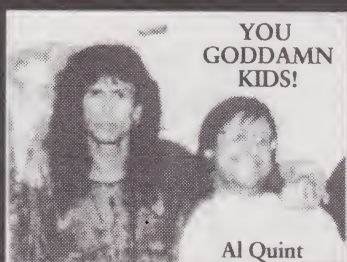
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**W**here have I been? If Jeff and Brett would keep me apprised of deadlines, I might have been on-the-ball enough to get a column to them in time. Well, it's still my fault for not keeping up with such things. I did get sidetracked finishing the new issue of *Suburban Voice*, which ended up taking a year due to my own inertia and, as you'll see, real life getting in the way.

Actually, I did write a column some months back and swear to the deity of your choice that I sent it in to them. Somehow, it got lost in the shuffle. In retrospect,



I'm kind of glad it didn't run because, at the time, I was lamenting what I felt was the loss of a long-time friendship following the marriage of this guy that I'd known for well over a decade...I noted

that I was hearing from him less, that he was turning rather, well, square. I've since spoken with him a few times and hung out with him at the recent Mission of Burma reunion. I still feel as though there's not quite the connection there used to be and that perhaps we've *both* changed, but I still consider him a friend and it was great to share the experience of rocking out to a band we both love. That's in addition to seeing the show with my wife, Ellen—it took me back to when we were first going out and used to see Burma all the time. I'll talk more about that later in the column...

In that "lost" column, I also indulged in some good-natured ribbing of our fearless leader, Jeff Bale, for appearing on that Green Day "Behind The Music" episode on VH1 over the summer, wondering what this world was coming to when he could appear in public with that wild hair of his. Or something like that. I also wondered why I had such an addiction to those "rockumentaries" in the first place. They do follow a predictable pattern—rags to riches to the inevitable fall to a phoenix-like resurrection (well, most of the time). I can't stop watching 'em, even when I'm not a fan of the bands they profile. On second thought, I haven't been able to get through the one on Journey without changing the channel—sorry, everyone has limits.

So that's what you missed. Not much, in retrospect. Anyway, there's a lot to write about since my last column appeared in the May/June 2001 issue. Pre-September 11. I mean, I was a cynical bastard before then, but I'm afraid that those tragic events have hardened me even more. Not that I've completely given up hope, but I'm sure feeling out of step with the world (to quote the great prophet Ian MacKaye). Actually, maybe not out of step with the world, but certainly with the prevailing sentiments in the good 'ol USA. I feel out of step with what the polls claim in this country—that most

Americans approve of George Dubya's job performance and approve of our current military activities overseas—an overwhelming approval in fact. I'm not sure if I believe those numbers but, hey, that's my cynical nature, once again.

I suppose at this juncture it's necessary to mention that the attacks on 9/11 resulted in a huge personal loss. One of my closest friends, Jane Simpkin, an individual who I considered as family, was on United flight 175, the second plane that crashed into the World Trade Center. I found out she was on the plane completely by accident—I've repeated this story a few times, in my own 'zine and a few other 'zines, so forgive me if you've seen it before—I was online early that morning and saw a Yahoo News item that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. Thinking "what a terrible accident," I made a mental note to check out the story after going to a few of my favorite websites. On one message board I frequent, someone posted a comment along the lines of "we're going to war," in reference to the plane crash, and I quickly turned on CNN to find out what was happening. This was just after the second plane, the one containing Jane, had hit the building. I watched the events unfold over the next hour or so and decided I needed a break, so I went out to pick up my mail in Lynn. En-route, I decided to give Jane a call on my cell phone (yes, I own one of those things but shut it off when eating out, at the movies, etc...). If anyone would be able to put things in perspective or have something incisive to say, it'd be Jane. She was never one to mince words and would let you know her opinion in no uncertain terms. An intimidating person, with her short hair, tattoos and authoritative British accent but, underneath that imposing exterior, one of the nicest and most-compassionate people I've ever known. A fiercely loyal friend who would do anything for me or Ellen, who'd been through some tough times, but had overcome that adversity and recently started law school. She wanted to be a defense attorney, and I know she would have been one of the best.

Jane's mother picked up the phone, sounding distraught, and told me that Jane had left that morning for LA on business (she was working for a music publishing company at the time) and that her flight, from Boston's Logan Airport, couldn't be accounted for. She gave me the flight number and, about an hour later, I found out that it was the second plane. We got confirmation from her sister that she'd been killed later that evening.

Without getting too maudlin, I'll just say briefly that I miss her immensely—Jane was one of the few friends I've ever had that I felt really understood my mindset and knew where I was coming from. And just when I thought I had a sick, perverse sense of humor, she would always top me and voice things I would never say, even if I was thinking them, and that would cause me to laugh out loud. Profane and offensive, but usually on-the-mark and funny as hell. Such as the way she referred to annoying children she encountered as "demon spawn"—not that she hated all children, but you know exactly the type she's talking about. I'm laughing now while typing that, and am also sad that I'll never hear her say things like that again. It's been *very* tough the last few months.

On to the larger issues at hand, though. So many thoughts still going through my mind—for one, the military action that's still going on in Afghanistan as I write this. One might



think that, since my friend was murdered, I'd have revenge on my mind. In the aftermath, there were calls for swift retaliation. We were attacked and must respond, right? That sure seemed to be what most Americans wanted, if you believe the polls. Bomb 'em back into oblivion. Some pundits were calling for the use of nuclear weapons. While I want the perpetrators of this reprehensible crime against humanity brought to justice, I frankly don't think the US went about it in the right way. I'll be candid and state that I can't say what EXACTLY we should be doing, but I don't think killing thousands of innocent civilians, as has apparently happened (I've heard reports in the British press stating the count could be as high as 4000), does anything to honor my friend's memory or the others who died in those attacks. That's my opinion—and if I concur with Howard Zinn's writings on this war (go to [alternet.org](http://alternet.org) for his and other pundits' opinions), don't take that to mean I'm a dupe of the left, accepting anything spoon-fed to me at face value. I think this is vengeance, not defending freedom, and I reached that conclusion after plenty of reflection and soul-searching in the days following the attacks.

Then there's the extreme patriotism/nationalism that has gripped the country. An orgy of flags no matter where you go, along with such slogans as "In God We Trust" and "God Bless America." So much for the separation of church and state. And if god really exists, why would he, she, or it pick sides, anyway? You can't escape those flags-in every store window, on cars, on large containers of popcorn at the local K-Mart, on people's t-shirts, jackets and lapels. It seems as though every news channel has a flag motif as part of its on-screen design (if that's the term), with many of the anchors wearing a stars 'n stripes pin to complement it. We're flag-happy to the max. Baseball and football games have turned into super-patriotic rallies. I'm writing this before the Super Bowl game, and there's no way in hell I'm going to subject myself to the "Salute to America" or whatever they have planned for the halftime extravaganza. Makes me think of that "Simpsons" episode where Homer is watching the halftime show by Hooray For Everything and their salute to the best hemisphere, the Western Hemisphere. No thanks. And you can take your Olympics and shove 'em up your patriotic ass, too. I've felt that way since 1984, when the LA Olympics brought on a rampant amount of mindless nationalism. Of course, that was the year that the Soviet Union and their allies boycotted the Olympics, which means that all those US gold medals were won because of a lack of competition, anyway. What an ugly year 1984 was—all that USA-USA jingoism, Reagan getting re-elected. Sheesh, what a fuckin' nightmare. But it continues.

Getting back to the present time, though, you haven't experienced torture until you've heard the jerk in the row behind you at a baseball game sing, very loudly and offkey, "God Bless The USA," one of the worst fucking songs ever written. I'm non-violent, by nature, but I think even Gandhi might have been driven to the point of physical retaliation by

that one. Oh yeah, "I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free."

Free? That's right, unless you choose to express a dissenting viewpoint with the prevailing opinion. Then you're more likely than ever to be labeled a traitor and told to get the hell out of the country. Media outlets which have dared to speak out against US actions or attempted to place them in some kind of context with US foreign-policy abuses, while not condoning the terror attacks, have been subjected to hate mail and death threats. *The Progressive* magazine's Matthew Rothschild detailed some of these missives in his November 2002 column, such as this lovely piece of work: "I wish you and Barbara T. Lee [Democrat of California and the sole member of congress to vote against authorizing Bush to use force] were in the World Trade Center last week and got your terrorist-loving asses blown up... you serve no purpose in our

free society. You make me sick. Drop dead!" Ari Fleischer, Bush's press secretary, later stated that people need to "watch what they say."

Sure, the jackbooted thugs aren't rounding us up yet, but they did round up 1000 "suspects" whose names they refused to reveal. According to self-described "human rights lawyer" Michael Ratner, on his website ([www.humanrightsnow.com](http://www.humanrightsnow.com)), "The FBI began massive detentions and investiga-

tions of individuals suspected of terrorist connections, almost all of them non-citizens of Middle Eastern descent; over 1100 have been arrested. Many were held for days without access to lawyers or knowledge of the charges against them; many are still in detention. Few, if any, have been proven to have a connection with the September 11 attacks and remain in jail despite having been cleared. In some cases, people were arrested merely for being from a country like Pakistan and having expired student visas."

Civil liberties are under assault, most notably from the so-called USA/PATRIOT Act, which only one US Senator, Russ Feingold, and a small minority in the US house had the courage to oppose. Bush signed it on October 26 and, according to the January 2002 issue of *Z Magazine* (yep, another leftist publication-deal with it),

"every clause of this law violated the US Constitution. Under this law (a) any federal law enforcement agency may secretly enter any home or business, collect evidence, not inform the citizen of the entry, and then use the evidence (seized or planted) to convict the occupant of a crime; (b) any police agency has the power to monitor all Internet traffic and emails, intercept cell phones without warrant of millions of "suspects" (c) any Federal police agency can invade any business premises and seize all records on

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# HIT SQUAD

the basis that it is "connected" with a terrorist investigation. Citizens who publicly protest these arbitrary, invasive police actions can be arrested."

I've said this before and heard it echoed elsewhere-I don't think the Bill of Rights of the US Constitution could be ratified in the current political climate. I don't expect the CIA to come around in the middle of the night and take me away for writing these thoughts, but I found myself choosing words more carefully in the days and weeks after the 11th. With the über-nationalism and war fever gripping the nation, it's not a particularly welcoming environment for those whose opinions are different from the norm.

There are all the anecdotes about how Arabic-looking people were harassed, threatened, and even killed in the days following the attacks. One need look no further than the Yahoo message boards to find the most vitriolic type of racism and xenophobia. That's nothing new, of course, and while it's just peckerheads hiding behind internet anonymity, it does give one pause to realize that there are people among us who consider those from different ethnic or racial backgrounds to be somehow inferior or worthy candidates for genocide. Maybe that's a tad bombastic, and I shouldn't be shocked at how ignorant many (most?) people are. But it's not just on the internet...a friend of mine told me his brother, who works at a restaurant, was complaining about all the "towelheads" that come in. And that expression has been used on local and national talk radio shows, as well. That's within their First Amendment rights, of course? It sure is...free speech, as always, is a double-edged sword.

So much for brevity... I've covered these topics in a pretty sweeping manner, and have been shooting from the hip (lip?) a bit. I won't even have time here to express in detail how my tolerance for the mainstream press, TV, and radio is at an all-time low, especially since they've turned into flag-waving propaganda arms for this so-called war effort, e.g., Dan Rather saying he'll line-up behind the president. I'm just grateful I have access to alternative points of view for which, of course, one must also apply the bullshit detector, but there are a lot of non-mainstream and foreign sources that provide a decidedly different viewpoint. Seek 'em out and make up your own mind...

And don't even get me started on this Enron nonsense...something tells me that this is a scandal we won't stop hearing about for quite some time. I just hope the truth will be revealed.

Enough on world affairs...though it's a hard topic to avoid. I don't even like going out to public gatherings anymore, outside of punk and hardcore shows-not that those are always perfect, either, but at least it's somewhere I feel comfortable and amongst "my own," so to speak. It's kept me going, lately. Tough times mean finding solace in music that speaks to me, that voices my emotions and feelings, that provides a catharsis or release-or even a temporary diversion from this cruel world. That's always been the case, and I'm sure the same could be said for most readers of this 'zine. I did lay low for about a month after 9/11, but gradually got back into the swing of show-going.

I recently got to attend two quite different reunion shows

and wouldn't have missed them for anything...some people take a dim view of reunions, looking at them as cheap nostalgia, cashing in, a way to regain past glories or some combination of the above. While one of these reunions did have something of a cash-in whiff-that being Mission Of Burma-they still played a hell of a show, nearly 20 years after disbanding. For those of you unaware of Burma, their sound is kind of tough to describe, but let me take a crack at it-a dose of art-school punk and post-punk, especially Wire, Gang Of Four, and Pere Ubu, mixed with pop and psych influences; later, they took a bit of hardcore's raw aggression into the mix as well. Sometimes abrasive, sometimes accessible, and taking all those elements and making them into something their own. And, while Burma are often cited as an influential band, I can't think of too many bands since that have sounded particularly like them. REM covered their first single, the anthemic "Academy Fight Song," and Moby did "That's When I Reach For My Revolver," but they're still cool.

Anyway, they had to break up in 1983 when guitarist/vocalist Roger Miller developed tinnitus. After there was a chapter written about them in Michael Azerrad's *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, a book about the 80's indie rock scene, it generated new interest in the band and they decided to reconvene, albeit only temporarily and without one member, tape manipulator Martin Swope, whose place was taken by Bob Weston, ex-Volcano Suns (one of drummer Peter Prescott's post-Burma bands) and current Shellac bassist. Three shows in Boston, two in NYC, all of 'em sold out and a mix of old fans and younger folks checking them out for the first time. While it wasn't as explosive as I recall them being (I suppose that comes from seeing so many in-your-face hardcore bands lately), it was still a thrill to see them play and play damn well, at that. Two decades later, I still remembered the nuances and shadings of almost every song they performed, and for nearly two hours I was transported back to a different time. But their music doesn't sound dated-which conjures up that old "ahead of their time" cliché, but in this case it fits. Yeah, tickets were \$25 and so were t-shirts (which I passed on)-frankly, I think it was on the pricey side, but sometimes you bite the bullet and I have no regrets about it. I urge you to check out their recordings, which are available on Ryko-the "Signals Calls and Marches" EP, which includes the "Academy Fight Song" single, their sole full-length studio album "Versus," and posthumous live album, "The Horrible Truth About Burma," both of which include many bonus tracks from the original LPs. Taang issued some of the band's various demo sessions on two separate releases, "Forget" and "Peking Spring," and they're also worth seeking out.

The other reunion show, about a week before Burma, featured the Pist, a punk band from Connecticut who I missed the boat on during much of their early- to mid-90's tenure, though I managed to see them one time shortly before they split up. They got back together to play the Tune-Inn one last time before it shut its doors for good. The Tune-Inn is a ten-year mainstay of the all-ages punk scene in that part of New England. Actually, the Pist were supposed to play just one show, but when that quickly sold out they added a second show the following day, which I wasn't able to attend and heard was the better of the two. Such is life, but it was a pleasure to once again be able to experience the Pist's straight-ahead, basic values punk rock in the live setting. Infectious songs and intelligent lyrics. Even with some of the



shit-for-brains in the audience, who I wouldn't let within 300 yards of my house. Even with many members of said audience standing on the stage and rendering the musicians invisible. Even with the occasional bum note and equipment problem. Even after leaving my camera behind (which, thankfully, was recovered)...it was a blast, and I'm glad I got another chance to see them play. And I think it was definitely for the right reasons-one last blow-out at the Tune-Inn-plus, once again, even though it had only been about 5 or 6 years, it gave younger fans a chance to see a band whose stature has grown since their demise. And most of the members remain active in the punk/hardcore community, with guitarist Bill Chamberlain currently playing in Caustic Christ and Behind Enemy Lines, drummer Brian Marshall now handling the vocals in the Pac-Men, and vocalist Al Ouimet operating a recording studio and planning another musical project in the future.

## AL'S TOP 10 LP'S/CD'S OF 2001:

Note that I'm putting these in alphabetical order, except for Spazm 151, which is my album of the year. Close call, though. 9 Shocks Terror and F-Minus also got a ton of play around here.

### SPAZM 151 - s/t (Mind Control)

Holy shit...throttling, over-the-top hardcore punk from a bunch of Texas wackos who snuck into Boston in early August and played in front of about 15-20 people at a loft in Roxbury. If bands like Poison Idea, Motörhead, or Jerry's Kids get you all giddy, this band's for you. Loud and aggressive, yet also catchy. High energy stuff, kids. (1012 Brodie Street/Austin, TX 78704)

...and the rest

### ALLERGIC TO WHORES - "Shadows In The Killing Field" (Sound Pollution)

A Cleveland hardcore band I wasn't familiar with before hearing this disc, their second album (the first was self-released). A few similarities to Nine Shocks Terror, with the rock 'n' roll vibe and anthemic qualities of a few songs, but they've also got a good amount of old-school hardcore fervor, as well as pissed-off lyrics. (PO Box 17742/Covington, KY 41017)

### F-MINUS - "Suburban Blight" (Hellcat)

One of the more underrated bands in the Hellcat/Epitaph stable...hell, they're underrated, period. Blistering, angry hardcore punk by this 2 male/2 female unit from LA. Brevity is their name, as the whole thing is over in less than half an hour, but it's quality you want, not necessarily quantity, and the quality is apparent from the opening powerchord. (2798 Sunset Blvd./LA, CA 90026)

### HOLIER THAN THOU - "The Hating Of The Guts" (Six Weeks)

High-powered skatecore meets crossover-the vocals sound like John from Nuclear Assault and there's definitely that speed metal whiff, but no bad hair and no wank. An economical, rampaging assault. Along with their rip-snortin' 7" (and all the tracks are on the CD), these guys are off to an impressive start. (225 Lincoln Ave./Cotati, CA 94931)

### LEFTOVER CRACK - "Mediocre Generica" (Hellcat)

Out of the ashes of Choking Victim, but delayed when they had to change the name of the album from "Shoot The Kids At School" (the company that prints the booklets wouldn't do the job with that title-lame!) and worth the wait. A smokin' smorgasbord of punk, ska, hardcore, rock 'n' roll, and even a gospel interlude. Songs you won't be able to get out of your head, and one hell of an anti-authoritarian message. (2798 Sunset Blvd./LA, CA 90026)

### LIMPWRIST (Leguna Armada)

Martin from Los Crudos, joined by some East Coast friends and an in-your-face gay, straight-edge message set to raging hardcore punk. It's created controversy and made some people uncomfortable-in other words, they're accomplishing their purpose. The fact that it totally kicks ass doesn't hurt, either. (1010 Riverine Ave./Santa Ana, CA 92701)

### NERVE AGENTS - "The Butterly Collector" (Hellcat)

Not as amazing as the previous "Days Of The White Owl," but another powerful, haunting work of dark-hued punk taking its inspiration from an early 80s SoCal style and even a touch of Goth.

### 9 SHOCKS TERROR - "Paying Ohmage" (Sound Pollution)

One of the best bands in the US, period-both live and on record. Their second album gives you a crunching combination of Japanese and American-inspired hardcore, along with a strong 70s rock 'n' roll spirit. A bulldozing effect and it grooves. Total fucking devastation. (PO Box 17742/Covington, KY 41017)

### PAC-MEN (Red Tape)

The former drummer for the Pist, Brian Marshall, is the frontman for this CT punk band, and they've forged a thorny combination of '77 punk and early 80's hardcore. Smart, scene-critical lyrics, but the Pac-Men are also about bringing back the fun and deflating the sometimes overbearing sense of self-importance. (PO Box 4468/Danbury, CT 06813-4468)

### ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT - "Group Sounds" (Vagrant)

Their best album since "Hot Charity," with one hooky whopper after another...a scintillating blend of tasty, grinding guitar licks, a stomping backbeat, and horns (one of the only outfits I can stand who use brass and/or woodwinds). And Speedo just exudes rock 'n' roll soul. Still a great live band, too. (2118 Wilshire Blvd., #361/Santa Monica, CA 90403)

And finally, communicate! I have a new email address, which is suburbanvoice2002@yahoo.com, and the technologically-challenged can contact me at PO Box 2746, Lynn, MA 01903. There's a new issue of *Suburban Voice* finally available, and it comes with a 22-track CD, so get in touch for ordering info. My radio show, "Sonic Overload," is now heard on Monday nights from 8 to 10 PM on Allston-Brighton Free Radio. 1670 AM in Boston and on the web at [www.abfreeradio.org](http://www.abfreeradio.org). ☺



# HIT SQUAD

## MY WILD WEEKEND WITH DONNY THE PUNK

**D**onny the Punk was a penpal dating back to my junior year in high school. He was somewhat famous from his writings in *Punk* magazine and even *Spin*. He was an ex-convict who'd done time for dealing acid. It was in prison that he'd learned the subordinate skills that added the word "Punk" to his name. He was always offering to suck my dick over the phone, and we discussed a mutual

## JIMMY REJECT

interest in "watersports." Donny basically considered himself a "Florence Nightengale" to men who weren't getting sexual release. He was particularly partial to teenage males, considering them symbols of the Veerashivan deity Skanda, God of beauty and youth. Veerashivism was Donny's religion. Veerashivans generally worshipped the demonic entity Shiva, who was represented by a statue of the phallus. Although Donny generally preferred the ladies, any knowledge of him was definitely a gateway to the homoerotic side of existence. Although I wasn't interested in gay sex, Donny lived in New York City, a town I was dying to party in.

For a graduation present I asked for (and got) a round trip to New York City. My dad was all about trying to get me a nice hotel room for the trip, someplace where he had the phone number and would be able to contact me. I went behind his back and made arrangements to stay with Donny the weekend of the Stiff Little Fingers concert at the Ritz. When the day came, I finished my morning shift at Stop 'n' Shop, came home, and left a note on the refrigerator saying something to the effect of "Gone to NY, be back later", and then hopped a train to Donnyville.

When I got off the train in NYC, I saw a fellow with a Sid Vicious T-shirt and hair that he wore slicked back, creating a Buddy Holly effect (it was actually a Y-shaped mohawk that he wore combed down.). I knew this must be the guy. I introduced myself and we forded the majestic subway city to Donny's abode. The walls of Donny's apartment were smothered in punk posters from 1977 to the present. We sat and smoked marijuana and then he gave me a tour of his place, which included a framed picture of him in a junior boxing league from the late 1950s. "This guy's OLD!" I thought.

As the schematics of Donny's apartment grew to kaleidoscopic dimensions, I knew this was the first time I'd really gotten high. Just then Donny pointed out his Veerashivan shrine, adorned with phallic and genital figures. The eroticism that per-

meated our phone conversations flooded my sedated mind, inducing anxiety. I sat down and told Donny that his shrine made me uncomfortable. He sat down and tried to assuage my fears by defending his spirituality and saying that it boded no ill will. Just then I stared ahead and took in the stoned sight of a 43 year old, bisexual, ex-con punk veteran explaining an obscure Eastern religion to me. I might as well have been in Bulgaria, it was so strange and exotic. And I tell ya, the weed haven't even kicked in yet. "This stuff will take you on a loop!" Donny warned. When we hit the street on the way to the Stiff Little Fingers concert, I knew what he meant by loop. As Donny was telling me about his Marine Corps father, I was getting the sensation of floating four feet above the pavement, doing somersaults in midair. Deep within my mind, I had forgiven Donny for being so weird. He was just talking about whatever as I would glide forward, drifting through waves of sheer ecstasy.

After a rather amusing subway ride we arrived at the grand, luxurious Ritz night club to see Stiff Little Fingers. Before the band went on, I kind of tagged along behind Donny. I looked around, rather intrigued by the cleavage of the stylish punkettes in attendance. Then Stiff Little Fingers went on. As it was with most punk shows back then, the opening chords inspired a surge of adrenaline, commanding me to DANCE! I immediately jumped into the pit and slammed like a crazed dervish. I realized I was not out of marijuana's grip yet. Time divided itself so that I was only cognizant of it about every fifth of every second. This gave everything a flickering motion that suggested that the rhythm of the universe was interrupted in a manner best approximating a strobe light. This was how I ended up after a day that began with bundling groceries: slam dancing in translucent alter-reality.

Donny and I returned to his apartment and drowned out the experience in reminiscence and beer. We went to bed in adjacent cots, listening to the Dead Boys, when I suddenly asked if he wanted to "do anything to me." He told me he'd like to suck my dick and have me piss all over him, but these things would have to be purely consensual. This eased my mind and I drifted off to sleep.

The next day's project was to interview Mykel Board, famed pedophile and *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* columnist, for a gay punk fanzine called *Homocore*. But first there was to be some prerequisite education. Since I'd been needing Donny to turn me on to acid, he suggested we do a milder psychedelic known as ecstasy. As Donny was preparing two tinfoil packets of white powder to be eaten, I asked, "How does this stuff make you feel?" "Good!" was his reply. Good was right. Donny lay relaxed and permissive on his cot, while I sat up with a shit-eating smile on my mug. All the pain that had plagued me all my life drained outward, allowing me to grin in the face of sheer euphoria. I gently conversed with Donny, as the rivulets of bliss cascaded through my body. "Fuck, all those Buzzcocks records were amazing," I stated. "Well, how would you feel if (Buzzcocks' singer) Pete Shelley was here propositioning you like I am right now?" Donny asked. Any act would have to be consensual, but he wasn't giving up without a fight.

When the ecstasy died down, I started drinking, then we smoked some dope, then I started drinking again, then we smoked some dope again. By the time it came to walk to Mykel's place, I was fucking out of it. I was wearing a G.G. Allin T-shirt



covered by an army jacket with G.G. Allin painted on the back, and ripped up, bleached jeans revealing the fishnet stockings underneath. Walking down the street, I hardly gave any thought to anybody looking at me strangely, let alone beating me up. I was just too fucked up to notice. All vision was perceived as a television screen, being viewed from an unfathomable distance. I simply was not there.

I bought and drank some more beers on the way, and by the time we got to Mykel's apartment I was at the brink of utter oblivion. And there he was. God, he was short. I had read his words so many times, drinking them in as though they were brewed from my own mind. And there he was, standing before me in grinning insecurity.

Before the interview, we went to a nearby video store so Mykel could rent a movie. Walking down the street, Mykel seemed more like Woody Allen than the punk pundit who argued in favor of racist bands and against radical feminism. He was chattering about the movie he was going to rent, his voice peppered with a quirky, Jewish accent. He seemed like a dork. So did Donny. Here I was, with two of the most famous punk rockers in America, and I was a little embarrassed! We got to the video store, where I bought a porno tape by underground recording/film artist/temptress Lydia Lunch. God, this weed was making me horny.

We went back to Mykel's apartment and the interview began. Donny and Mykel were throwing around 25 cent phrases (both were Columbia graduates), while I sat there, two mush-minded to put two words together. I looked at the clock: it read 9 P.M. Donny and I would be partying for the next several hours. Two day's worth of freedom, booze, and dope were pushing my nerves toward ecstasy. Time...time lay ahead in great, golden oceans of discovery to be charted with rather glorious results.

After the interview and a trip to the porno theatre, where a black kid in the bathroom was smoking crack, we returned to Donny's place and lit the bowl a few more times. In fact, many more times. Man, was I stoned now. Conventional reality was a terrestrial domain, above which we were hovering. This weekend, I had been introduced to drugs in a very big way. And now, my universe had been engulfed in quite a few lungfuls of the very potent smoke. I sat there catatonic, impervious to Donny's subversive words. He casually mentioned that he'd seen a prison guard stuffed into a coal furnace. My mind could faintly detect the acrid smoke of the guard's charred corpse, but my senses reported nothing. My numbness increased as I took more sips of beer. God damn.

At around one in the morning we wound up upstairs in the bathroom. I was sitting on the toilet while Donny lay in his briefs in the bathtub. The drugs and booze had pushed my libido into agonizing intensity. I was moaning on and on about wanting to fuck chicks up the ass. Donny nudged his head back and invited me to piss on him. I was beyond the point of inhibition. The sickly, yellow, fetid fluid covered Donny as he lay submissively in the tub. Finally, a liquid discharged rapidly from my own cock was making an impact on a warm body. I know, wrong fluid, wrong gender. But my bladder felt sweet relief as his body took on ethereal amber hue. When it was all over, Donny told me that G.G. Allin would be proud. I grinned.

The next day we would be seeing straightedge kingpins the

**Donny told me  
that G.G. Allin  
would be proud.  
I grinned.**

Gorilla Biscuits at CBGB's in the rough and tough Bowery. I was still wearing my G.G. Allin/fishnet stocking regalia. Donny wore the same Sid Vicious T-shirt and piss. He hadn't showered. First we went to Donny's girlfriend J.D.'s to smoke some weed. I felt so close to Donny. He let me do something no girl ever would. "You think my weed is good? Wait til you smoke J.D.'s!" Donny said.

We arrived at J.D.'s apartment. She looked like a hippy, not that I had any problem with that. J.D. knew very little about punk and asked many questions about the buttons and T-shirts we were wearing, and about which bands we were seeing that weekend. Then we smoked some weed. God damn, this was the shit. Summer sunlight cascaded gorgeously through the room, as my senses edged toward elation. J.D. was talking about sixties'

gurus like Ram Dass coming over to smoke her weed. It was like a looking glass into the delights of the sixties' counterculture.

Then it was time for the straightedge show. Nearing CBGB's, beer in hand, I instantly knew that I was not welcomed by the straightedgers. I loved it. My anti-social ego was massaged deeply by their hardened, hateful stares. We entered the club, where I lurched languidly into the hostile pit, entrenched in Dionysian oblivion. A wiry Hispanic guy gave me an incredibly hateful look, signifying that I would not get out of there unharmed. He represented straightedge. He represented the accepted. He represented conformity. He represented everything I hated. I gave him a wistful, defiant look reflective of the soul that was blissfully dying amidst the haze of prolonged euphoria. Then I disappeared to the side of the club.

He caught up to me and started punching me on the side of the head, hard, painfully. I had taken beatings before, but this guy knew what he was doing. I was rather pissed off. At the conclusion of the beating, I flipped him off rabidly and screamed some G.G. Allin lyrics at him. He disappeared and I snorted in indignant fury. Just then he came back and pummeled me until I was bleeding profusely. I began to cry. I was crying until we boarded a taxi to the hospital, where the loss of blood enhanced my already heavy euphoria. At the hospital to get stitches in my head, my blood-covered visage spoke to the doctors with a sedated murmur. What a weekend!

I took the train back to Massachusetts a few days later, late in the night. I arrived and walked to the subway staring at the sky, realizing that the transcendent stars shone on all earthly conditions, and surely beyond to the cosmos. My parents would undoubtedly be curious as to what I'd been up to that weekend. I wondered what I'd tell them. ☺

Jimmy Reject  
115 W. Squantum Street #203  
Quincy, MA 02171  
Rejectone@aol.com

[Note: This chapter has been excerpted from Jimmy's forthcoming autobiography, *Down In Flames*]



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VAGRANT



In a *Hit List* world, I'm afraid to guess how the Beatles might stack up. After all, they weren't all that obnoxious. But as the myth suggests, they might've once been the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world. Now, I'm not referring to their endless resume of accomplishments in studio recording and songwriting. I'm thinking of their nightclubbing five-sets-a-night rep acquired in Hamburg, Germany, at the dawn of the Sixties. The Beatles themselves described this early era as their glory days. Of course, where's the evidence for this? Mostly, we are left with the "post-peak" (ha ha) singles, EPs, and albums. Like every other nostalgic sap, I played 'em all the other night.

As reported in the news, George Harrison just passed away. Quickly, both the media and internet ghetto coalesced in their opinion that George was a "genius." Along the way, I was a George Harrison advocate myself, supporting the cause by purchasing such slabs of instant tofu, I mean karma, as "All Things Must Pass", "Concert For Bangladesh", and "Living In A Material World". That was over twenty years ago. I hadn't thought about George Harrison in years. Since then, I'm sure I've listened more to the Seeds and Stooges than the Fab Four. I consider that a good use of my time. After all, the Beatles are on the local oldies station every chance I can avoid.

However, the night after the news hit that Beatle George had died, my wife hauled all their CDs to the stereo and, in an exhibition of criminally poor CD handling, conducted a five-hour tribute to a band that she didn't think she even cared about. She kicked things off, reverently enough, with a George tune. After one or two other Harrison sub-genius spotlights, it was decided to just dig the Beatles in general. As with twenty years or so of the Seeds and Stooges, it proved to be a totally fulfilling investment of my time.

I won't bore you with the details, except to say it reminded me that Lennon-McCartney have my vote for greatest songwriters of the century; that George Harrison's supporting six-string contribution was eventually incalculable, and that Ringo played the most phenomenal drums of anyone on "Strawberry Fields Forever".

Wife and I awoke a few hours later with considerable headaches (not the Beatles' fault, even though

there were "Revolution" and "Helter Skelter") but renewed mega-enthusiasm for one band's colossal body of work. This sort of scenario must have been played out in tens of thousands of households all over the world that same night. The Beatles just had that kind of magic. They reached most of us, which is more than can be said of anyone else.

I've just received an amazing book that provides a visual and written enhancement to this type of experience. *Beatles Gear* by Andy Babiuk (Backbeat Publishing; [www.backbeatbooks.com](http://www.backbeatbooks.com)) is positioned as the first serious overview of the instrumentation behind the sound that changed the world. In other words, unless you're a gearhead, there's more than you would ever want to know about Vox, Rickenbacker, and Ludwig, as well as how to record "Strawberry Fields Forever." Yet Babiuk (co-founder of one of the best live band I have ever seen, the Chesterfield Kings) is the ultimate fan. He blends an intimate knowledge of what went into the

sound with what we all really care about — the music and the personalities. Though the photographs of Beatle instruments from as far back as '56 appear throughout the 256 oversized, glossy, Technicolor pages (this is a coffee table tome of the highest, heaviest order), it is the text that I have rescheduled my schedule around for the past couple of days.

While I am a card-carrying fan, I always disliked that

## JUKEBOX JURY

BY JEFF JAREMA

clean, thin, unthreatening lead guitar solo sound employed by George Harrison throughout much of the '64 recordings (including even the most hard rocking of 'em). Though non-critical, I dig how Babiuk opens a chapter dedicated to '65 with an emboldened quote from George, "The more I listened to it, the more I decided I didn't like the guitar sound I had. It was crap." True. But by 1966, Harrison was amassing a string of solos that were every bit as biting as those of England's other trailblazing guitarists.

In short, *Beatles Gear* is the ultimate visual history of the instrumentation linked to a garage band on the climb; just your average garage band, the Beatles. If this sells, a publisher would be smart to enlist Babiuk for a similar venture dedicated to the most influential axe-slingers throughout the ages (psst, don't forget Ritchie Blackmore).

Outside of the Beatles, the indiscriminant misuse of the "genius" tag causes me many laughs; it sells issues of *MOJO*, too. That's not to say that I don't get suckered in every once in

awhile. Though I'm no expert on the subject, I admire the voice of Scott Walker as much as that of any other singer. As lead voice of the Walker Brothers, he wasn't singing rock 'n' roll, however. Instead, his emotive baritone drove several of the most dramatic ballads ever waxed. While I don't know the details behind the song "My Ship Is Coming In" (i.e., who it was written for, who copied it, etc.), when I compare Walker's vocal to the one other reading known to me, by legendary soul singer Walter Jackson, it's simply *no contest*. Scott Walker's version is the keeper; an astonishing blend of operatic phrasing and soulfulness. It's the flagship tearjerker on my jukebox.

Yet I don't get the fuss over the highly worshipped post-Walker Brothers solo LP, "Scott 4". I've seen it hyped everywhere, including in recommendations from many of the most reasonable writers out there. While Scott Walker's voice is typically magnificent throughout, songs like "The Seventh Seal" and

*Pssst, don't forget  
Ritchie Blackmore*



# HIT SQUAD

"The Old Man's Back Again (Dedicated to the Neo-Stalinist Regime)" illustrate the excessiveness and the pretentiousness. Perhaps one of you readers can explain the supposed genius of "Scott 4" to me. Then again, great music shouldn't be *this* inaccessible, should it?

As for my loud jukebox listening habits, 99% of my purchases for the past couple of years have been old soul 45s. I covered many of 'em in the last issue. Of all the acts featured on my jukebox, I have come to the conclusion (OK, conclusion) that nobody sounds better than Archie Bell & the Drells on Atlantic Records, at least through their Gamble-Huff era. (Just the other day, I found a photo at my Dad's house of Archie, taken by the only photographer of note in my family back in '75 — see Archie get attacked by a preppy alligator!). As of yesterday, I crossed an aesthetic line by dropping the first disco record into my juke carousel; it was another Gamble-Huff classic, "(I'm Just Thinking About) Coolin' Out" by Jerry Butler (with slick chicks and strings, no less). No apologies. It's great.

As for punkier sounds on 45, I finally got around to scoring a copy of "Who Do You Love" by the Lost (Stanton Park, reissued a full five years ago; also on CD via Arf Arf Records). This wyld attempt ranks up there with the Druids of Stonehenge on Sundazed (plus the unreissued Fallen Angels version) as most over-the-top treatment of the Bo Diddley rave. The 45 sleeve includes a live shot of Willie Alexander as a savage, Phil May-type frontman, same era (c. '65). Other faves of late are "Do You

Have to Ask" by the Swinging Machine and "Hey Joe" by the Hazards (both on the "Aliens, Psychos and Wild Things" comp of Virginia mid-sixties tuff-punkers on Norton Records vinyl! Old habits seem hard to break, especially when the sound is now greatly improved) and "Bad Girl" (from Zakary Thaks' "Form the Habit" CD on Sundazed; ditto) completely addictive garage rawk. The drummer in this band ties with the guy from the Syndicate of Sound as most unsung skins-pounder of the "Nuggets" era. The lead singer was all of 15 years old on this record.

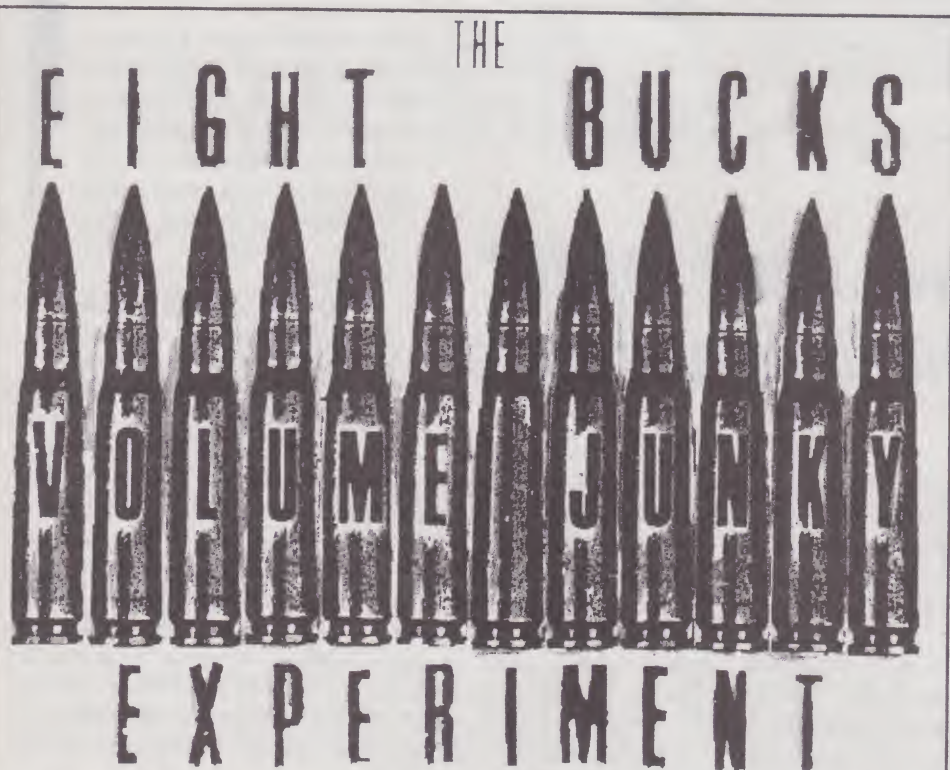
Sanctuary Records, who gave us a stateside release of the Kinks' "BBC Sessions" earlier in the year (see my column in *HL* #14), has now begun a release campaign of the band's British Invasion-era LPs. The Kinks' eponymous UK album (released here as "You Really Got Me") is a high-energy romp. "Kinda Kinks" is their all-important sophomore slump. In this latest reissue, it stands as somewhat less than essential, especially since neither it nor "The Kinks" include the Davies brothers' most assaultive single, "All Day and All the Night!"

"The Kink Kontroversy", on the other hand, comes fully recommended. It mixes the clang of "Till The End Of The Day" and "Where Have All The Good Times Gone" with signs of the oft-cited Ray Davies songwriting maturity. Other stellar performances to be found on "Kontroversy" are "You Can't Win", "Milk Cow Blues", and bonus essentials "Dedicated Follower of Fashion" (two versions) and "Sitting on My Sofa". There are plenty of loud photos of the early Kinks attempting to revive the velvet industry, plus somewhat perfunctory liner notes (especially when compared to John Mendelssohn's sets that accompanied the Rhino CD editions of these records). One almost amusing aside: How did Shel Talmy get away with a production as sloppy as the one on "The Kinks Kontroversy"?

(Sanctuary has also released two Peter Green-period Fleetwood Mac sets. One compiles two discs of BBC sessions and is excellent. The other package consists of the band's second gig ever, at London's Marquee Club, and is absolutely abysmal, at least in terms of sound quality).

For sheer punkitude, dig this assessment from Howard Berkman of the '66 Knaves, from the liner notes of Sundazed's 10" collection of pure knavedom, "Leave Me Alone": "The difference between the Knaves and everybody else is we were terribly dysfunctional juvenile delinquent kids. The other kids, like the Shadows of Knight, the Little Boy Blues, the Dirty Wurds and those guys, they had families to come home to, people patting them on the head, buying them a guitar, buying them an amp. I was always getting tremendous, tremendous resistance. None of us were getting anything but stormy seas from our people. We were really angry."

The Knaves took all this anger and redirected it towards early proto-punk rock, providing a rallying point for all the wildest city kids in their hometown of Chicago in the mid-sixties. They recycled their anger into something positive. And that's my sermon for today. ☺



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# THE WHITE STRIPES

## When Stripes are Stars (or They Just Think They Are): An Observation/Tour Diary of Sorts

by Long Gone John

Well, when Jack and Meg begged me to accompany them on this tour, I thought at first that nothing could be less appealing than being around Jack White's enormously swollen ego for ten days. But then I started worrying about Meg and became concerned that she desperately needed a buffer zone, and I also figured that I'd better go in order to protect the massive investment I've put into the White Stripes. Don't get me wrong, Jack is a nice guy, but only if and when there is something he needs from you, and from me he needed and continues to need a lot of things.

When I first met Jack and Meg, they were still going by the name Ventura Highway, named after that repulsive song by the even more repulsive band, America. Actually, for the record - and for the very first time ever - I'll admit that yes, it was me who suggested the name the White Stripes and insisted on their wearing red and white clothing. When I first saw them Meg was dressing like a slightly hipper Mariah Carey and Jack was just another southwest Detroit Kid Rock wannabe with his wife beater with "Yo Jacko" printed on the front and his baggy designer jean shorts hanging off his ass with the mandatory chain wallet being displayed at regulation length.

Okay, back to basics. Jack desperately needed direction, he needed a substantial crash course in the history of blues and early rock and roll and, of course, he desperately needed singing and guitar lessons, and for these lessons I spared no expense and enlisted the most highly recommended and qualified teachers available. Luckily, Jack was an eager

student and learned quickly and was uncharacteristically so appreciative that he began bringing gifts such as homemade Rice Krispies treats and little poodles which he crafted himself out of yarn and aluminum cans to his teachers. Early on I decided on the "simple is best" tactic, so Meg was already proficient enough for the music I had planned for them. Sorry, I do go on.

Okay, so I arrived in Detroit and got the tons of records, CD's, and required presents from baggage claim and dragged it all outside to our agreed-upon meeting location, then

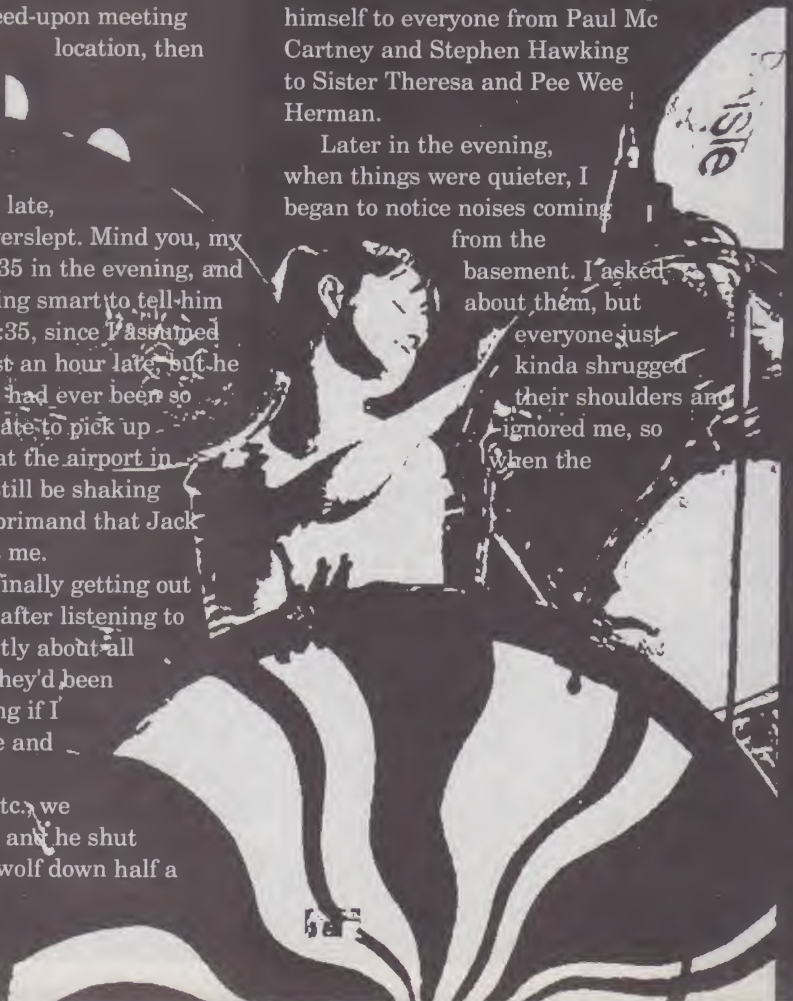
proceeded to wait and wait and wait. Jack finally showed up at the airport 3 1/2 hours late, claiming he had overslept. Mind you, my plane arrived at 7:35 in the evening, and I thought I was being smart to tell him that I'd arrive at 6:35, since I assumed that he'd be at least an hour late, but he sure fooled me. If I had ever been so callous to dare be late to pick up him and Meg late at the airport in L.A., I'd probably still be shaking from the severe reprimand that Jack would've leveled at me.

Anyway, I was finally getting out of the airport and, after listening to Jack brag incessantly about all the current press they'd been receiving and asking if I saw how handsome and cool he looked in particular photos etc., we eventually stopped and he shut up long enough to wolf down half a dozen chili dogs at

their local Coney Island. When we arrived at Stripey Central (Jack's house), I was left to unload the records and gifts from the van whilst Jackie boy ran in to watch live videos of his fave band, the White Stripes. When I'd completed unloading I made my way through the rubble on the floor and pushed aside what I suspected was several weeks' worth of empty cigarette packs, pop bottles, and fast food wrappers from the couch, then sat down to relax. There I sat for several hours watching videos and listening attentively to Jack compare himself to everyone from Paul McCartney and Stephen Hawking to Sister Theresa and Pee Wee Herman.

Later in the evening, when things were quieter, I began to notice noises coming

from the basement. I asked about them, but everyone just kinda shrugged their shoulders and ignored me, so when the





# STRIPES

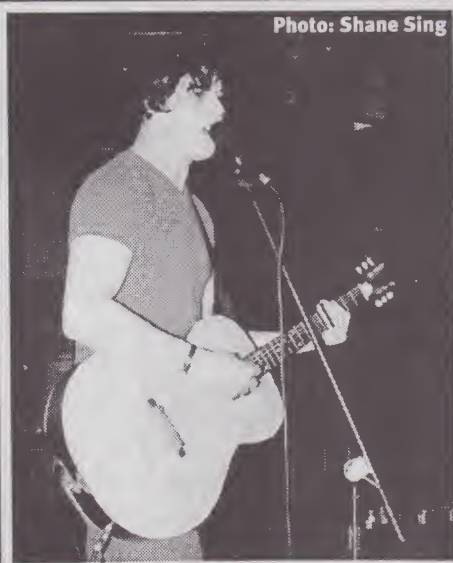


opportunity arose I snuck down and made a rather startling discovery...Now I am not easily shocked and I don't think I'm over-reacting or being unnecessarily concerned, but it really did bother me when I was faced with the reality of those seemingly unending shifts of Asian children down in that sweltering basement constantly working to make White Stripes merchandise. When I questioned Jack about it, I couldn't help wondering if it was really true that their parents just happened to be killed in a plane crash.



Photo: Mox

Photo: Shane Sing



## Day One: Friday, 15 June, Jack's Detroit digs

Ack! Between the time change and the noise of constant production down in the basement, I really didn't sleep at all. It's 11:20 AM and everyone else is still asleep. Meg is at her house and will probably arrive here soon. Around 5:30 this morning Jack mumbled something about beauty sleep and went upstairs to bed. I know I'm no prize myself, but when Jack finally washed off all his make-up last night I knew the beauty sleep remark wasn't to be taken lightly.

There is NO WAY that that guy is really only 26!!

This is who will be in the "entourage" when we finally head towards Pittsburgh for tonight's show. There will be Jack; dear sweet Missy Mega Meg; John Baker, the New Zealand refugee who assumes the road manager role; and Ben, the foul-farting Weasel/Dirt Bombs drummer Blackwell who is Jack's semi-retarded cousin (or is it nephew?), or at least is rumored to be so due to some sorta scary backwoods Michigan inbreeding; and of course, me, your aged, wise-ass, nearly sincere and on rare occasions humble narrator. It is indeed a peculiar entourage, to say the least...

OK, that's it for now, I gotta help, well, actually orchestrate the loading of the van or it'll never be done properly.

**4:49 PM**, Detroit time: It seems as if we left Jack's house hours ago, then had to go by Jason's from the Von Bondies cuz we're sorta caravanning together. ANYWAY, the ever so efficient Jack forgot an effects pedal, so we have to head back to his house to get it.

**5:47 PM**: We're back on the road again with AC/DC blaring on the new stereo and me, in my semi-charming naive

foolishness, am gonna try to go to sleep. **7:09**: We just stopped for about an hour outside of Cleveland to urinate in the nice clean Ohio lavatories, and I bought milk and drank it. But I think it might've been a bad choice, 'cause with the introduction of the Willie Nelson rubbish emanating from the speakers I fear I may soon be in a vomitose mode.

**8:19**: Nothing to report.

## Day Two: Saturday, 16 June

**1:45 AM**: 1st Street Pub. Well, the show is over, the

Pittsburghians/Pittsburghonians – or is it Pittsburghers – are presently satiated. I'm in the dressing room with the band. Jack is mildly moaning about how he saw a few people not applauding after each song and asking if the set sounded especially brilliant or if his hair looked alright. So I lied and told him yes to both queries, and watched as a swell of pride overtook him. I was then able to ignore him for 10 minutes or so before he needed his ego stroked again. Meg was hitting the Jack Daniels pretty heavily, but then Meg is always hitting the Jack Daniels pretty heavily. I like that about





Photo: Joanne Vaught

**"I'm guessing that by now I've seen the White Stripes fifty times, yet somehow there are always revelations; whether there are new dance routines or different Bible passages being read between songs, there is always something new."**



Photo: He

Meg. She confided that she rarely drank before she met Jack, and that an alcoholic state afforded her the necessary help she needed to ignore Jack properly.

I can't believe how the sheep come out in droves. They've heard of the White Stripes, maybe they've even heard the music, but wouldn't their time be better spent back at home scrubbing a toilet or helping their senile old granny bake cornbread?

I'd tell you a little bit about the Von Bondies, who opened the show and who are doing the whole tour with the Stripey beasts, but I'm pretty sure I'd receive a lashing of sorts for wasting valuable space on them, so I'll save myself the effort. Suffice to say that they are a great, talented young band, also from Detroit, and I just happened to have put their album "Lack of Communication" out last July. End of plug.

**9:00:** We just stopped at a truck stop in God knows where and my, ahem, esteemed fellow travelers are all fast asleep. I'd slept a bit already, which is a bit more than usual, so I got out, relieved myself in a timely fashion, and am sitting on a stretch of grass contemplating the adventure thus far.

**11:27:** Phlegmington, PA. We finally got on the road again. I've been driving for the last two hours. We just stopped for gas, and at my insistence Jack donated \$20 to local Boy Scout troop 396, who were hosting a rather dimly attended car wash. Jack started boasting to the dumbfounded troop about his experience as an Eagle Scout and reminisced about

the time his fellow scouts had conned him into searching the woods for an elusive wampus kitty, which led him to remember an early song he had written entitled "Leave Me Alone with My Pocket Knife". Fortunately for all of us, he did not decide to sing. Instead, he tried to take a bit of time to teach them the "Hotel Yorba" dance, but I think they were considerably frightened – and rightly so – because he was wearing his girlfriend Marcie's little tennis outfit and did in fact look pretty damn scary.

**Saturday night:** New York, Bowery Ballroom: Wanna know something? It seems that New York sheep look pretty much the same as the sheep back in Pittsburgh. I guess sheep are pretty much sheep, unless you happen to talk to John Baker about them. He dreams that they are covered in whipped cream, wearing lingerie, and floating down a river.

Okay, the show. The opening band played, and I managed to ignore them completely. Then the Von Bondies played and were really quite amazing. Did I mention that their Sympathy album came out in July?

I'm guessing that by now I've seen the White Stripes fifty times, yet somehow there are always revelations; whether there are new dance routines or different Bible passages being read between songs, there is always something new. Jack rarely speaks to the audience, but when he reads from the Bible he gets an eerie iridescent glow around his head and, interestingly enough, Meg (who is a devout atheist) will often make rude finger gestures

towards Jack as he reads. Those two, what cards!

### Day Three: Sunday, June 17th

**Sunday morning:** Nothing exciting, everyone is headed off for breakfast to a trendy Soho eatery. Then Jack and Meg have photo shoots and interviews scheduled up until tonight's show.

I've drilled both of them pretty thoroughly by giving them possible answers to often-asked questions, and I think they finally have their brother/sister story straightened out.



**Sunday evening:** Show #3. Vincent Gallo, P.J. Harvey, Chris and Kate Hudson are involved in a dressing room shmooze fest. There was nosecond encore because an ugly drag queen forced her/his way on stage for "Pretty Good Looking" and was joined by an even uglier one for Marlene Dietrich. And no Bolweevil song. Hmmmph!

### Day Four: Monday, June 18th

**Monday evening:** Mercury Lounge, show #4. P.J. and Vincent again. Bolweevil. Loretta Lynn's "Rated X".

### Day Five: Tuesday, June 19th

**Tuesday morning:** Leaving New York, and taking the Frenchtown, New Jersey detour. We visit Tim, Mika, and Bondo – from Crypt Records, natch – and their dream mansion on a cliff.





Photo: Mat-e Drazek



**Tuesday evening:** The Northstar in Philly. City of Brotherly Love? Um, I think not. There were lots of fireworks tonight. Jack baited the crowd, telling

Photo: Creston Lea



them that they lived in a very unfriendly city, and of course his venomous diatribe went way over their heads.

**2:25 AM:** Heading for Providence, Rhode Island

#### **Day Six: Wednesday, June 20th**

**Wednesday night:** Providence. Both Mr. Airplane Man and White Stripes do "For the Love of Ivy", and the Stripes do Gene Vincent's "Baby Blue" and the Premiers' "Farmer John". The Von Bondies and Mr. Airplane Man were great tonight, and I didn't get a chance to see the White Stripes because I was backstage telling the other bands how great they were. It's the sound of Tara.

#### **Day Seven: Thursday, June 21st**

**6:30 PM:** Middle East, Cambridge, MA. There's nothing terribly exciting to write about. We went and had pizza, but Cambridge has shitty pizza! The crust is thin and tortilla-like. John Lee Hooker died today, and the Stripes did his "Boogie Chillen'" as a tribute.

It was an amazing show. Mr. Airplane finally had a proper sound and a great reception, as it was their own town. I was really impressed with them. Have I mentioned that I put out an album by Mr. Airplane man called "Red Light"? The Von Bondies, as usual, were once

making Jack's special throat tea, and young Ben is shining Jack's stage shoes.

**1:10 AM:** It's all over now, baby blue. By this time tomorrow, we'll be back in Detroit. Four of the nine shows sold out, the band sold tons of merchandise, and they now have lots of new converts ready and willing to kill themselves in order to follow them on the next passing comet to their reward in heaven.

#### **Day Nine: Sunday, June 24th**

**3:45 PM:** It's been nearly four hours

again great.

#### **Day Seven: Friday, June 22nd**

**Friday evening:** The Black Cat, Washington, AC/DC. The place was hot and horrible, so I've somehow successfully managed to block the entire evening's festivities from my mind.

#### **Day Eight: Saturday, June 23rd**

**Saturday evening:** Fletchers, Baltimore (or -less). Everyone is dragging, Meg has a headache and wants to phone in her performance tonight, and Jack is whining that his hair is curly AGAIN and is frantic beyond belief. Baker Boy is

since we all hauled our sorry asses into the van, and we're on the way back to Detroit triumphant and weary. We've stopped for root beer, ice cream, and cigarettes, to urinate and defecate, and of course for the almighty holy gasoline. Right now we're listening to "White Blood Cells" (the gospel according to Jack the Ripper and Megasaurus), and somehow it's the fitting soundtrack as this adventure begins to wind down. Everyone is singing along like a demented choir and, interestingly enough, somehow this frenzied outpouring seems as wholesome and untainted as one of those cellophane-wrapped peppermints that the White Stripes have based their existence on. Don't think I'm getting all weepy eyed on you, but it has been an amazing



adventure and each new show I see by the Stripey beasts confirms my belief – once again – that Meg and Jack are incredibly talented and are, at the very least, viable contenders to the throne of the Great White Hope. But don't tell them I said so.

The coolest thing that happened on the way back to Detroit was stopping at a fast food place in Ohio and seeing a table full of Amish people huddled around a bag of french fries. Yum!

#### Closing Comments:

**Meg:** What day is it? Is it June?

**Jack:** Where are we? I've had more than enough of Long Gone John!

**John:** What was the highlight of the tour?

**Jack:**

**Meg:**

An encore of Bollweevil.

#### Day Ten: Monday, June 25th

**2:00 PM:** Well, we've been in the air about 45 minutes, and nothing terribly exciting has happened yet.

There are no hostage situations, as far as I can tell. The stewardesses just passed out warm towelettes. I used mine

all over my body, but some of the passengers apparently got annoyed when I took off my pants to clean my rectal area real good. What's wrong with that?+



# "There are no hostage situations, as far as I can tell. The stewardesses just passed out warm towelettes."

Photo: Henx







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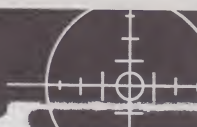
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# HIT SQUAD



**A** while ago I turned in a column called "Why I Kick Ass," which detailed a bet between the Widowmaker (the bass player/co-founder of Cocknoose, etc.) and yours truly, made one boozy evening in Hostile City. The bet has recently reached the point of "closure," so I thought it would be prudent to acknowledge it as such in the pages of *Hit List*. For those of you who didn't read that column, I'll first offer a brief overview of the events that led up to the bet — before I get to what followed, the bet itself. I'll try to keep it short, but you know how I get when I start telling a story...

flip flops  
AND  
champagne



leslie goldman

It all began the night before the 1999 COS Supershow, when Larry and I attended a pre-show party at a local bar. At the time, we were also putting together an issue of *Carbon 14*. During the course of that evening Larry, no doubt while discussing wrestling with a group of the guys, mentioned that we were going to be interviewing wrestling manager/valet extraordinaire Missy Hyatt. Cosmo (a/k/a the "Cosmic Commander of Wrestling") requested an autographed picture.

Larry said he'd ask. Widowmaker requested a pair of her undies. Larry, being Larry, said he'd ask. Widowmaker countered with "You won't ask her for a pair of her panties." And naturally Larry replied that he would. Then Widowmaker came and asked me if we'd really have the balls to ask Missy Hyatt for her panties. I didn't know what the fuck he was talking about, but I was drinking and I've lived with Larry for a long time, so I guess it's rubbed off on me. I simply replied, "Of course we do." Later, Widowmaker told Larry that if we came home from the interview with a pair of Missy Hyatt's drawers, he would get the words "Larry and Leslie Kick Ass" tattooed on his body. When Larry told me about that part later in the evening, I decided we should make an effort to get those panties — I mean, how funny would it be if we got them and he was actually forced to get the tattoo?

But over the course of the next two days at the Supershow, Larry somehow fell out of the picture. In retrospect, it was

probably because it was more fun for Widowmaker to give me a hard time about it. It actually became a little war of the sexes. All weekend he kept riding me about the panties and how we'd never, ever be able to get 'em. The longer it went on, the more determined I became to get the panties. At some point, since it was getting down to me against him, the bet was whittled down to getting a tattoo that said "Leslie Kicks Ass." Widowmaker astutely pointed out that if I did get the panties (which he again assured me I would not), he would have to get the tattoo; but if I didn't get them, shouldn't I have to do something? I agreed and asked him what he thought I should have to do. He came up with me having to give him a pair of my panties if I couldn't get hers. In comparison to getting a tattoo, I thought I was getting off easy, so I quickly agreed and we shook on it. Then the bet was officially sealed, and of course you can all guess what happened after that — more verbal sparring. I'd hear my name called across the room, and when I'd turn my head there he'd be, yelling "Don't forget about mah panties!" I kept it up as well; every time he'd try to tell me how I'd never get it done, I'd counter with just as much conviction that he shouldn't be so quick to doubt me and my ability to finesse the situation. The trash talk didn't stop at the Supershow either, since he left Philly on Sunday and the interview was scheduled for the following Wednesday. He called me four times in between, including a message he left on our answering machine while we were in the car on our way to New York for the interview.

I will not reveal how I convinced Ms. Hyatt to give me her panties — a lady never tells — but I most certainly did come home with a lacy beige thong from Victoria's Secret, plucked specially from her undie drawer by the interviewee herself, who signed it for the Widowmaker. (We also got Cosmo his picture.) For good measure we took some pictures of her and her panties so that he couldn't question their

authenticity. (They're certainly not my color or size, since she's smaller than me, and in any case I prefer black.) When we got home I called him to crow about my acquisition. He demanded proof. I told him that I was prepared for that response and that pictures would be in the mail within days. (At that point, he realized to his chagrin that I really did have the panties.)

Once he got the pictures he agreed that I had fulfilled my part of the bargain, and that it was time for him to do so. Since then, he's been saying on and off that he would be getting the tattoo "soon." And although it was taking a while, I believed that eventually he would, since he's really not the type to talk about doing something and not back it up with action. Lo and behold, one night a month or so ago I checked my e-mail and there was a message from the big Wid with an attachment titled "tattoo.jpg". Unfortunately, it took me another week to figure out how to open the file. (Of course, that led to more friendly written abuse sent back and forth

***I will not reveal how  
I convinced Ms. Hyatt  
to give me her panties  
— a lady never tells.***



between both parties.) We finally determined that the problem lay in the fact that he had "obtained" a newer version of Photoshop than ours, but we were eventually able to get a copy of the newer version and, much to my delight, within minutes of loading the program I was looking at a photo of Widowmaker's leg with "Leslie Kicks Ass" tattooed on it! What a glorious day it was!

Larry and I couldn't get to Austin for this year's Supershow, but he promised me he would show it to people to further confirm that he had fulfilled his part of the bet. This turned out to be a flawed plan, since we all know what goes on at Supershows — aside from bands playing. I asked around when everybody got back, but most people barely remembered who they'd talked to or how they got back to the hotel, let alone seeing one of Widowmaker's many tattoos. I have yet to see it in person, but I do have the photo (which I've provided to *Hit List* for reproduction) and I'm willing to take his word just as he took mine. It's too bad the tattoo is on his leg, since he never wears shorts, but that's OK. I just didn't want him to get it on his ass or any other place where I might not want to examine it. Knowing it's there is enough, really.

And so the circle became complete. By the time this column sees print, Widowmaker will be able to say honestly that he has a personally autographed undergarment from one of the coolest female managers/valets in wrestling history, and I can say that there's an underground punk legend in

## LESLIE GOLDMAN

Lawrence, KS with "Leslie Kicks Ass" tattooed on his leg. Now that the "panty incident" (as I like to call it) has reached the point of assuming its rightful place in rock'n'roll history; I'll leave it up to the reader to decide who in fact "won" the bet. All I'm saying is that the sanctity of my own panties have remained intact, and that the only man who will have a pair to hang on his wall as a trophy is my husband. We each have our bragging rights, and that's probably what the wager was all about in the first place. I've chosen not to give much thought to what the big Wid, or the one located below his belt buckle, will be doing with Ms. Hyatt's panties — thankfully, that's out of my hands. While I'm

here, though, I should thank the other person who made this story possible: the lovely Missy Hyatt for giving up one of her thongs for the cause, a strong display of sisterhood indeed. I should probably also thank the Sugar Mom's bartenders — whoever they were that night — for getting Widowmaker lubed up enough to get the whole thing started in the first place. Let it be known for the record that the Widowmaker is a real man — a man of honor — and that he never, ever tried to wiggle out of his half of the bargain. Whether or not he'll want to step to me again, only time will tell. Just in case, I'll learn how to play dominoes. +



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**O**n November 7, 2001, the U.S. government's Office of the Coordinator of Counterterrorism issued a list of some 62 organizations and individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist organizations, in particular with 'Usamah ibn Ladin's al-Qai'dah network. Number 56 on the list was Achmed Albert Friedrich Armand Huber, a former Swiss journalist with close ties both to Islamic fundamentalists and far-right extremists.<sup>1</sup> A longtime convert to Islam, the 74-year-old Huber was cited by the government for his presence on the five-man managing committee of Nada

The closing of Al Taqwa's doors, however, has done little to eliminate interest in Huber's own ties to Islamic extremism. Shortly after September 11, Huber himself drew attention to a possible Al Taqwa link to ibn Laden when he stated that while attending an Islamic conference in Beirut, he had encountered some of ibn Laden's cadre, whom he described as "very discrete, well-educated, highly intelligent people — an entirely different quality than earlier." Huber also described 9/11 as an act of "counter-terror" against the World Trade Center, a "tower of godlessness," and the Pentagon, "a symbol of Satan." However, he denied having any

Nasir government was hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood. He recommended that Huber make a second *shahada* in Egypt, which Huber did in February 1962 at Cairo's famous Al-Ahzar University.

After spending more time in the Middle East, Huber abandoned his earlier pro-Israeli views with a vengeance. He told the French investigative journalist Pierre Péan that in 1965 he began to accept the views of the Egyptian-based Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni, who gave Huber, "a totally different version" of the history and nature of the Third Reich. The Grand Mufti knew Hitler personally and actively collaborated with the Axis powers

## THE MYSTERIOUS ACHMED HUBER: FRIEND TO HITLER, ALLAH...AND IBN LADIN?

Management, a Lugano-based financial institution, which was known as Al Taqwa (Fear of God) Management prior to March 2001. Al Taqwa was specifically placed on the list due to suspicions that it may have played a key role in laundering money for ibn Laden. A few hours before the official announcement from Washington, police officials raided Al Taqwa's offices in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, as well as Huber's home in Muri, a suburb of Bern, and the homes of Yusuf Nada and 'Ali Ghalib Himmat, two other Al Taqwa directors who were also on the U.S. list. Al Taqwa's accounts were frozen as well. A few weeks later, on November 29, Italian investigators shut down a Milan-based Islamic Cultural Center suspected of being al-Qai'dah's logistical center for European operations. The Center's key financial supporter, Ahmad Idris Nasr al-Din, a wealthy businessman and Kuwait's former honorary consul in Milan, was yet another Al Taqwa director. Finally, in early January of 2002, Al Taqwa announced that it was closing its doors for good.<sup>2</sup>

financial dealings with ibn Laden and stressed that Al Taqwa was strictly involved in financing development projects in Third World countries. In a September 20, 2001 interview with the Swiss publication *FACTS*, Huber claimed that attempts to link Al Taqwa to ibn Laden were "an invention of the Mossad."

To those familiar with Huber, his statements regarding September 11 were hardly surprising. Born in Freiburg, Switzerland, to Protestant parents in 1927, Huber's penchant for political extremism began in the late 1950s when, as a member of the Swiss Socialist Party, he helped shelter a group of Muslims who had come to Switzerland to buy weapons for the Algerian struggle against French rule. Huber was so impressed by his conversations with them that he began studying Islam. He then made *shahada* (the profession of faith in Islam) at an Islamic center in Geneva founded by the Muslim Brotherhood. Huber, however, was warned by Fathi al-Dhib, Egypt's then-ambassador to Switzerland (whose secretary Huber would later marry), that the

in World War II. (The Mufti was even responsible for creating the Bosnian-based 13th Waffen-SS Division that was composed of Muslim recruits.) Huber further told Péan that, while he was in Egypt, he also grew close to Johann von Leers, a fanatical Jew hater, former Nazi Propaganda Ministry official, and the Grand Mufti's good friend. Leers had relocated to Egypt in the mid-1950s, where he converted to Islam and changed his name to 'Umar Amin von Leers. He remained in Cairo until his death in 1965, helping to direct Nasir's propaganda apparatus, which regularly churned out Nazi-like anti-Semitic propaganda throughout the Arab world.

Back in Switzerland, Huber next became close friends with the Swiss banker François Genoud, whom Huber recalls first meeting in "pro-Arab associations." Best known for funding SS "butcher" Klaus Barbie's legal defense team, Genoud held the legal copyright to writings by Hitler, Goebbels, and Martin Bormann. Genoud, who committed suicide in 1996, is also believed to have played a



key role in the postwar management of Nazi funds. In the late 1960s he also worked closely with radical Palestinian groups, particularly the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Along with organizing legal support for captured PFLP militants, he even helped coordinate the PFLP's hijacking of a Lufthansa Boeing 747 en route from Delhi to Aden. Through his ties to the PFLP's leader, Dr. Wadi Haddad (who affectionately dubbed him "Shaykh François"), Genoud befriended Ilich Ramirez Sánchez, better known as "Carlos the Jackal." Both men remained in close contact right up to Genoud's death.<sup>3</sup>

by  
**Kevin  
Coogan**

At the same time that Genoud was developing close ties to the leftist PFLP, Huber was actively promoting pro-Arab views inside the Swiss left. While working as a Social Democratic journalist whose beat was the Swiss parliament, he became involved with the "Bern Nonconformists." The Nonconformists were a mix of 1960's counterculture activists, poets, painters, and New Leftists. Inside the Nonconformists, Huber used leftist rhetoric to push an anti-American, anti-Israeli, and strongly neutralist line.<sup>4</sup> In the 1970s, however, he found it increasingly difficult to operate inside the Left. The Swiss Socialist Party finally expelled Huber in 1994 for "Khomeinism, anti-Feminism, and contact with radical rightists."

Huber's statements regarding September 11 reflect a broader consensus inside the far right. They also echo the remarks of his friend Horst Mahler, a former leader of the far left terroroist group, the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF: Red Army Faction, also known as the Baader/Meinhof Gang), who is today a

**A**chmed Huber is not only a devout Muslim and supporter of political Islam; he also a leading member of the avowedly

Have you had enough of degenerate art, jungle music, environmental destruction, immorality, and Coca-Cola culture? Then

## ACHMED HUBER, THE AVALON GEMEINSCHAFT, AND THE SWISS "NEW RIGHT"

pagan Swiss-based Avalon Gemeinschaft (Avalon Society — also known as the Avalon Kreis or Avalon Circle). Avalon's estimated 150 members include aging Swiss SS volunteers, youthful far right fanatics, and died-in-the wool Holocaust deniers. Each summer solstice this motley mélange of characters journeys deep into the Swiss woods to ritually worship the pre-Christian Celtic gods of ancient Europe. They then spend the rest of the year bemoaning the Enlightenment and denying the Holocaust.

Although Huber is one of Avalon's leading members, he was not involved in founding the group. Avalon began as a curious mixture of Old Right and New Right currents that reflected its founding members involvement in a neo-Nazi youth group known as the Wiking-Jugend Schweiz (WJS), as well as their later rejection of cadre-based politics for the creation of Avalon as a self-proclaimed elite society. Besides being steeped in mystical imagery, Avalon's founders also embraced the "New Right" jargon most frequently associated with the French theorist Alain de Benoist, his Paris-based think-tank GRECE (the Groupement de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne), and GRECE's German counterpart, Pierre Krebs' Thule Seminar.

Avalon's origins begin in the end of 1986 with the formation of the WJS by two young far rightists, Roger Wüthrich and Andreas Lorenz. After Wüthrich and Lorenz returned from a winter camp in Germany sponsored by the Wiking-Jugend Deutschland (WJD), they were granted permission by the WJD to form a Swiss branch of the organization. The WJS was formally launched in April 1987, and thence began publishing a paper, *Nordwind*, that specifically targeted Swiss youth. As WJS propaganda put it,

come to us! Work with us for a better worthwhile future. Travel, camps, sports, adventure, comradeship, and love of our home belong to our program. Hard work, discipline, good manners, courage, and honor are things that for us again have meaning. The zero (Null) bloc of youth is already shuffling off to its decline with a Walkman in its ears and hamburgers on its brains. Not us! Join us! Viking Youth! That is the youth movement faithful to the people of Switzerland.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1988 the WJS, with help from the WJD, organized a summer camp in Seelisberg, Switzerland. Participants were told that they would learn things like folk dancing, old German letters, and sports like boxing. The WJS promised all those who signed up an experience of "forced marches in ankle deep mud" until the "dead tired" finally reached their goal "filthy, soaked with sweat, with a banner in hand, and a proud smile on [their] face." The forced marches were a necessary camp experience, *Nordwind* explained, because "in the all masculine cultural circles to which we belong, discipline and morals are the keystone of our view of life."<sup>2</sup>

Alas, few Swiss youth seemed willing to part with their blue jeans and Coke cans for folkdance lessons and forced marches. In February 1991, at the WJS's fourth convention in Worblaufen, Switzerland, the group voted to dissolve itself. Along with its failure to recruit youth cadres, the WJS was equally concerned about possible adverse publicity. Just a month earlier, a Swiss far rightist named Robert Burkhard — president of the Nationalrevolutionären Partei der Schweiz (NPS) — had been arrested



for a hand grenade attack on a journalist in Winterthur, Switzerland. After the police discovered WJS material inside Burkhard's apartment, the group feared that it too might now come under scrutiny by the Swiss authorities. Equally troubling was the development of ideological dissent inside the WJS itself. The Aargau Canton branch, for example, openly broke with the WJS's leadership and embraced a "national revolutionary direction" complete with open overtures to the Swiss Left. Roger Wüthrich, the WJS's co-founder, was particularly appalled by this move because he considered National Bolshevism a political dead end, particularly given the fall of Communism.<sup>3</sup>

### The Birth of the Avalon Gemeinschaft

Following the official dissolution of the WJS, Wüthrich and another rightist named Andreas Grossweiler decided to build a new elite cadre organization, the Avalon Gemeinschaft. They structured their new group on the New Right models espoused by de Benoist

of the Thule Seminar while serving as the Swiss correspondent for GRECE's journal, *Nouvelle École*.<sup>6</sup>

In his book *Strategie der kulturellen Revolution*, Pierre Krebs, head of the Thule Seminar, gives a useful overview of New Right thinking when he embraces the theory of "intellectual hegemony" taken from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and "detoured" by the New Right. Krebs also articulated New Right themes when he attacked the "principle of equality" and instead demanded a "War against Egalitarianism and Rootlessness: For Originality and Identity! Against Americanism and Collectivism: For Culture and Organic Humanism! Race is Class! For a Heterogeneous World of Homogeneous Peoples! *Vive la difference!*"<sup>7</sup>

Starting in 1987, members of the Swiss branch of the Thule Seminar took part in a pagan gathering around the Celtic holiday Lughnasad, along with a delegation from the WJS and various neo-Nazis from across Europe. In 1988 the Swiss branch of the Thule Seminar, along with the Circle Proudhon, organized seemingly schol-

and GRECE in France and by Pierre Krebs and the Thule Seminar in Germany.

Wüthrich and Grossweiler's turn from a failed cadre-based political activist model to a self-proclaimed elite structure did not occur out of the blue. The formation of the Avalon Gemeinschaft came after the Swiss far right had learned about French and German "New Right" theory, which primarily occurred through the activity of a young Geneva-based rightist named Pascal Junod. In 1983 Junod first established the Centre National de la Pensée Européenne with former members of the New European Order (NEO)-backed student group, the Nouvel Ordre Social, to help popularize New Right ideas in Switzerland.<sup>4</sup> One year later, Junod established another Geneva-based organization, the Cercle Proudhon, in 1984.<sup>5</sup> Junod also helped organize the Swiss branch

arly-sounding talks on topics like "The History of the Templers and 'The Heritage of the Indo-Europeans' on the grounds of Geneva University."<sup>8</sup>

Although lacking the scholarly chops of a de Benoist or a Krebs, Avalon's founders were quick to proclaim their own elite status as well as their embrace of pagan ideas. Grossweiler, for example, said that Avalon's members "consider ourselves as an intellectual/spiritual elite and know that our ideas are incomprehensible to simple people." Avalon's emergence also came wrapped in a heavy dose of Celtic mysticism. One Avalon tract began,

*Avalon* — white mist covered island in an icy sea. *Avalon*, land of inner rest and the confident, holy land of the Celts. *Avalon*, original homeland and secure pole of our European culture. The land of King Arthur gives

leading spokesman for the far right Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD: National Democratic Party of Germany). Shortly after the WTC attack, Mahler issued a statement entitled "Independence Day live." In it, he argued that 9/11 "marked the end of the American Century, the end of global capitalism," and with it, the end of the secular "Yahweh-Cult of Mammonism." Huber is also a popular speaker at NPD events. In October 2000, for example, he addressed the seventh "European congress" of the NPD's youth organization, the Junge Nationaldemokraten (JN: Young National Democrats), on the topic "Islam and the New Right." On September 8, 2001, a few days before the WTC attack, he lectured on "Israel and the Muslim World" to another NPD-sponsored gathering in Saxony that attracted well over 1,000 radical rightists. The September issue of the NPD publication *Deutsche Stimme* also carried a lengthy interview with Huber (conducted before 9/11) in which he praised the Bush Administration for not having any "Jewish Zionist" advisors. "That's very important for us," he remarked. Huber's friendly feelings towards George, Jr., changed radically after he was publicly identified as a potential terrorist supporter. "It is for me an honor," he told the press, "to be put on the list from the USA gangster regime."

While until now there has been no "smoking gun" directly linking Al Taqwa to ibn Ladin, what is clear is that Al Taqwa is far from an ordinary financial institution, even without Huber's presence on its board. Al Taqwa has served for years as a key financial institution for the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in Egypt in the late 1920s by Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood has fought for over seventy years for the formation of a pure pan-Islamic theocratic state. Yusuf Nada and 'Ali Ghalib Himmat, the two Al Taqwa directors cited along with Huber on the U.S. list, are acknowledged longtime Brothers. According to the German newsweekly *Der Spiegel*, Himmat is also the president of the Bavaria-based Islamische Gesellschaft Deutschlands (IGD: Islamic Society of Germany), an organization founded by the Muslim Brotherhood that German authorities consider to be an ideological breeding ground for Islamic extremists. Himmat also serves as a director of the Geneva branch of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO), headquartered in Kuwait. Another IICO director, the Qatar-based Yusuf al-Qardawi, is president of Al Taqwa's counsel of religious advisors,



which ensures that the bank does not violate any teachings of the Qur'an.<sup>5</sup> Qardawi, a fiery speaker who is considered one of the Muslim Brotherhood's top spiritual leaders, is also an open supporter of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. He even issued a *fatwah* declaring Hamas suicide bombers to be martyrs and their acts to be "the highest form of *jihad*." Al Taqwa's financial involvement with Hamas became known after a 1997 scandal involving the disappearance of a large part of Hamas's treasury led to an internal investigation by Hamas that included a careful examination of Al Taqwa's role in the affair.<sup>6</sup>

Inside the Middle East, Egypt has been the most vigorous opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptian government has been at war with the Brotherhood since the early 1950s, when then Egyptian president Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir banned the group and arrested many of its leaders. As an organization committed to the establishment of a pan-Islamic state, the Muslim Brotherhood bitterly opposed Nasir's secular form of pan-Arab nationalism. The Brotherhood's staunch opposition to secular nationalism has also attracted financial support, particularly from Saudi Arabia. Saudi funds have also flowed into Al Taqwa's coffers. Huber himself even boasted about Al Taqwa's Saudi connection to Swiss journalist Richard Labévière. Asked by Labévière about Al Taqwa's finances, Huber replied:

As for the money, I cannot give details — except for Saudi Arabia, because that will change the bad perception people have of this country. Of course, the government is under American surveillance, but the kingdom has the great advantage of being a feudal state that leaves the great families total freedom to manage their oil funds as they wish. That's great! And today, the Saudis are very active, the details of their funds that come to the bank are a matter of bank secrecy.<sup>7</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood's close links to Al Taqwa, it is important to note, have also been cited as evidence of Al Taqwa's political moderation. This argument asserts that in countries like Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, the Muslim Brotherhood has supported the movement for political democracy precisely because the ruling regimes in these nations have used anti-democratic measures to prevent Islamist parties from gaining political

power. In Egypt, for example, while the Muslim Brotherhood is still technically banned, it remains that nation's largest opposition party, and 17 Brothers hold seats in Egypt's parliament as independents. The Brotherhood contends that it represents the moderate wing of political Islam, as opposed to overt terrorist groups like Islamic Jihad. To the Muslim Brotherhood's critics, however, the allegedly sharp division between the "moderate" Brothers and the jihadist militants is far from clear.

Even if one accepts the notion that Al Taqwa may have the same highly ambiguous relationship to Islamist terror as the Muslim Brotherhood itself, there can be little doubt about Huber's involvement with a highly visible terrorist regime. While Huber has worked closely with the Sunni wing of Islam represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Taqwa, he has also long been a leading supporter of the Shi'ite fundamentalist regime that took power in Iran in 1979 under the leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Since then, Iran has sponsored countless acts of terrorism, including the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement's destruction of the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon and — it would appear — the subsequent bombing of Israel's embassy in Argentina. Iran's continuing use of violence led the U.S. State Department to identify Iran as "the most active state sponsor of terrorism in 2000."

Huber's own ties to Iran are hardly secret. In 1989, amid a flurry of publicity, he lost his journalistic position with the Swiss press group Ringier after he openly supported Iran's *fatwah* condemning Salman Rushdie to death for his book *The Satanic Verses*. Huber's services to Iran are so highly valued that he is reportedly the only European Muslim ever to give a speech before the tomb of Imam Khomeini. Iran has also given political sanctuary to Huber's comrades in the Holocaust denial movement, and Radio Tehran regularly broadcasts interviews with "Holocaust revisionists." Huber is also a prominent speaker at Iranian-allied Islamic gatherings across the world, including America. He even explained how easy it was for him to visit the U.S. undetected: "Because I was registered in all the CIA computers as Achmed, but my passport still remains Albert, I can enter and exit the USA without any problem."<sup>8</sup> Huber has presented talks to pro-Khomeini groups like the Persian Speaking Group of the Muslim Students' Association (MSA). At the 27th MSA convention held in Chicago in December 1997, for example, Huber spoke on Islam

our society its name. Many of our way and beliefs shall find the power in the circle to resist the time of the wolf (the destruction of value). This is our spiritual place of refuge, [the] place of the calling to mind of Europe's eternal values, Courage, Honor, Loyalty.<sup>9</sup>

### Huber and Avalon

Achmed Huber's later emergence as a key Avalon leader no doubt reflects both his well-developed networking skills and his powerful contacts inside the European right. Huber's particular association with Avalon, however, may also be due in part to Avalon's New Right trappings. New Rightists are almost by definition extremely anti-American, and many look favorably on collaboration with the Islamic world. In traditional Islam they see a culture that has resisted the siren song of the Enlightenment. GRECE leader Alain de Benoist (who has visited both Iran and Libya) also regularly criticizes Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National for its harshly anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant views.

That said, Avalon appears to be a rather poor copy of the GRECE model. The New Right, it should be recalled, emerged in Paris in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response not just to the cultural Americanization of Europe but also as a reaction by a post-'68 generation of young right-wing activists to the failed Old Right's tedious embrace of Hitler nostalgia and crude anti-Semitism. Against this, the New Right reveled in rediscovering unorthodox theorists, particularly from the 1920s "Conservative Revolutionary" movement in Germany; thinkers like Carl Schmidt, Moeller van den Bruck, Ernst Niekisch, and Ernst Jünger. All of these men's ideas had either been highly marginalized or actively suppressed during the Nazi era. Under Huber and Wüthrich, however, Avalon is far closer to intellectually spurious groups like the California-based Institute for Holocaust Review than with the elite Parisian salon world of de Benoist.

Still, Huber and Wüthrich have tried to give Avalon some veneer of respectability. In March 1998, for example, on the two hundredth anniversary of his death, Huber and other Avalon members laid a wreath at



the memorial to General von Erlach, who was killed by Napoleon's troops in 1798. Von Erlach's death symbolized not just the end of Bern's *Ancien Régime* and the triumph of Napoleon's army, but also the victory of the Enlightenment ideals of equality, democracy, and brotherhood associated with the French Revolution that both Avalon and the New Right so despise. By laying a wreath at von Erlach's tomb, Huber and Avalon were suggesting that they were willing to fight once more to recapture a world once thought hopelessly vanished.

Huber and Wüthrich have also portrayed Avalon in a press communiqué as a highly respectable group that sponsors gatherings dedicated to scientific and cultural themes — particularly the honoring of Europe's "Celtic Germanic inheritance" — as well as to groundbreaking critical research into questions of contemporary history.<sup>10</sup> Avalon's eager embrace of Holocaust deniers, even more than its strange celebrations of the summer solstice, have stripped it of even a vague sense of legitimacy as a serious organization engaged in historical research.

Avalon functions as a kind of umbrella organization for the Holocaust denial movement in Switzerland. Under the cover name of the Studiengruppe für Geschichte (History Study Group), for example, Avalon sponsored a 1993 presentation by leading French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson at a hotel conference room in Bern. Some 70 people, including the NEO's Gaston-Armand Amaudruz, attended the gathering.<sup>11</sup> Huber's close friend Jürgen Graf, a leading Swiss Holocaust denier who is now living in Tehran, provided the simultaneous translation from French to German when Faurisson spoke. Robert H. Countess, an American editor of the *Institute for Historical Review*, also addressed an Avalon gathering in April 1995. Huber's later participation (along with Graf and the German NPD's Horst Mahler) in an IHR conference that was to have occurred in Beirut in the spring of 2001, can be seen as a logical extension of the kind of Holocaust denial activity that both Huber and Avalon have been involved with for years.

Finally, it seems particularly ironic that a self-proclaimed Muslim like Huber would be associated at all with any "New Right" grouping, even with a pale parody of the New Right such as

Avalon appears to be. Huber, after all, is a self-proclaimed devotee of Islam, an utterly monotheistic religion. In the pagan New Right canon, monotheism has always been portrayed as the original sin. This has been so ever since de Benoist identified the Enlightenment's universalistic values as a secular extension of a monotheist worldview; namely the Judeo-Christian tradition with which Islam claims to complete.

New Right theorists insist that they embrace paganism and the pagan notion of a universe of pluralistic gods precisely out of their desire to dethrone the monotheistic thought structures which they see as essential to the future elimination of American "monoculture." That a fanatical Islamic monotheist like Huber could spend each summer solstice out in the woods worshiping Celtic gods is one more bizarre twist to his already bizarre life. —KC

#### NOTES

1 *Nordwind*, as quoted in the July 1999 issue of *Megafon*, published by the Worblaufen, Switzerland, branch of Antifa. Worblaufen is also the hometown of Avalon's founder, Roger Wüthrich.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Peter Niggli & Jürg Frischknecht, *Rechte Seilschaften* (Zurich: WoZ im Rotpunkt, 1998), 618-19.

4 The Geneva branch of the Thule Seminar had the same post office box that the far right NOS held in the 1970s.

5 Junod's groups also maintained close ties to the Belgian New Right and publications like *Orientation* and *Vouloir*.

6 Claude Cantini, *Les Ultras* (Lausanne: En bas, 1983), 114-15.

7 *Rechte Seilschaften*, 686.

8 Jürg Frischknecht, "*Schweiz wir kommen*" (Zurich, Limmat, 1987), 164-66.

9 *Rechte Seilschaften*, 686.

10 *Ibid.*, 688.

11 *Ibid.*, 687-88.

at two panels with Imam Abdul Alim Musa and Sheikh Mohammad al-Asi, both of whom are associated with the pro-Khomeini Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT). Huber also appeared with both men earlier at another pro-Khomeini conference organized by the Muslim Parliament (MP), which was held in London in November 1996 and which advertised participation by representatives from both Hezbollah and Hamas.<sup>9</sup>

Even as Huber plays a major role in Islamist networks, he remains highly active inside Europe's far right elite. Along with a poster of Imam Khomeini and a framed quote from Hitler denouncing modern art, Huber's house contains a photo of his friend Jörg Haider, Austria's leading electoral rightist. But Huber's most eye-opening picture displays both himself and Genoud at a meeting in Spain with Léon Degrelle, a Waffen-SS General who Hitler once said he wanted to adopt as a son. Degrelle, who lived in Spain in order to escape war crimes charges in his native Belgium, was a top leader of the postwar ultra right.

Inside Switzerland, Huber helps direct the Avalon Gemeinschaft (Avalon Society), an elite far right group whose members include former Waffen-SS volunteers.<sup>10</sup> Each year Avalon's cadre retire to the woods during the summer solstice and conduct ritual celebrations of Europe's pagan past. Jürg Frischknecht, a leading expert on the Swiss far right, reports that Avalon — using the cover name Studiengruppe für Geschichte (History Study Group) — regularly sponsors lectures from leading Holocaust deniers, such as France's Robert Faurisson, which are held at four star hotels in Bern. Huber has also worked tirelessly to forge alliances between European rightists and Islamists, telling his fellow Europeans that their "enemies are not the Turks, but rather the American and German politicians with an American 'brain'." Huber hopes to establish an alliance between the anti-immigration European right and the Islamists based on the understanding that once Islamist parties take power, large-scale Muslim emigration to the West would end. Huber even organized a meeting between Jean-Marie Le Pen, head of France's largest "national populist" party, the Front National, and Huber's close friend Necmettin Erbakan, the head of the now banned Turkish Islamist party Rifah (Welfare), to develop a joint position on immigration.

In order to promote closer ties between the Euro-right and Islam, Huber regular-



ly points out to his rightist comrades that the Arabs were some of Nazi Germany's strongest supporters and indeed remain so to this day. In his September 2001 interview in *Deutsche Stimme*, for example, Huber proudly reported that at a large Palestinian congress held in Tehran, Iran's supreme religious leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, publicly rejected claims by "Zionists and Marxists" concerning German war crimes. Ayatollah Khamenei then stated that Muslims saw Germany differently both because the Nazis fought against colonial powers like England, France, Belgium, and Holland, and also "because the Third Reich, in the view of Muslims, contained some interesting Islamic elements," by which Khamenei was almost certainly referring to the Grand Mufti's role in World War II.

Huber has also tried to establish direct organizational links between U.S.- and

entitled *Der Unbekannte Islam* that still serves to define his political views today. In it, Huber identifies the "triple aggression" that he sees directed against Islam. The first aggression, naturally, is Zionism, whereas the second is Marxism, which Huber condemns both for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and for its corruption of Islamic intellectuals. He then identifies the third and final aggression as "the 'American Way of Life, which many Muslims have felt as specifically 'New-York-ish' and thus essentially 'Jewish.'"<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, Huber is convinced that the "New-York-ish" American Way of Life is destroying Islam. Now it is the task of investigators in both America and Europe to determine whether or not Huber and his friends in Al Taqwa have used "Islam" to destroy both New York and the American way of life. †

he believed that the 9/11 terrorist money trail would ultimately lead back to Swiss bank accounts set up by an organization founded by Genoud. Reports of a possible Genoud trail cite the involvement of a Swiss lawyer named Baudoin Dufour on the management committee of the Geneva branch of the Saudi Investment Company (SICO), which handles much of the bin-Laden family's investments abroad. Dufour is also alleged to have defended Genoud in a legal proceeding in 1983 against charges of terrorism although the details remain highly murky. At this stage, one can only say that any claim that links banking networks set up by Genoud before his 1996 death remain highly speculative.

4 See references to Huber in a recent study of the Bern Nonconformists by Fredi Lerch entitled *Muellers Weg ins*

European-based "Holocaust revisionists" and their Arab allies. Earlier this year, Huber and three of his closest collaborators, the NPD's Horst Mahler, Jürgen Graf (a leading Swiss Holocaust denier who fled to Iran to avoid serving a 15-month jail sentence for his activities), and the Swedish-based Ahmad Rami, a former Moroccan military officer who in 1987 founded Radio Islam to disseminate anti-Semitic, Holocaust denial, and pro-Nazi propaganda, teamed up with the California-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR) — the world's leading "Holocaust denial" organization — to organize an IHR-sponsored conference that was scheduled to take place in late March in a Hezbollah-controlled section of Beirut, Lebanon. Protests from Jewish groups, however, eventually forced the Lebanese government to ban the proposed gathering.

Looking back on Huber's career, it seems clear is that he has been most concerned with finding allies in the Muslim world to help him wage war against both Israel and the West. From the late 1950s until the 1970s, he publicly cast his lot with secular pan-Arabists like Nasir. In the wake of Egypt's military defeats in both the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, and after Nasir's successor Anwar Sadat signed a peace accord with Israel, Huber discovered an even more virulent form of anti-Western fanaticism in Iran. In 1982, he wrote an essay for a book

*An investigative journalist, Kevin Coogan is the author of Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fascist International (New York: Autonomedia, 1999). His most recent article for Hit List was on the International Action Center.*

#### NOTES:

1 Huber's first name is also frequently spelled "Ahmed" in reports on him. Technically, it should be Ahmad.

2 See a report from Reuters carried in the January 10, 2002 *New York Times* on Al Taqwa's closing.

3 Carlos has recently been in the news after his French lawyer Isabelle Coutant-Peyre, who has recently announced her intention to marry the jailed terrorist, was asked by Aicha Moussaoui, the mother of suspected 9/11 hijacker Zacarias Moussaoui, to represent her son. Coutant-Peyre is a member of the law firm of Jacques Vergès, the radical French lawyer and longtime Genoud ally who Genoud had hired to represent Klaus Barbie.

Genoud's name has also resurfaced in connection with September 11th. Ernest Backes, a leading European expert on money laundering, told the Luxembourg-based financial journal Plus Minus that

*Paradies* (Zurich: Rotpunkt, 2001).

5 *Der Spiegel*, 46/2001.

6 See Richard Labévière, *Les Dollars de la Terreur* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1999), 152-55.

7 *Ibid*, 151.

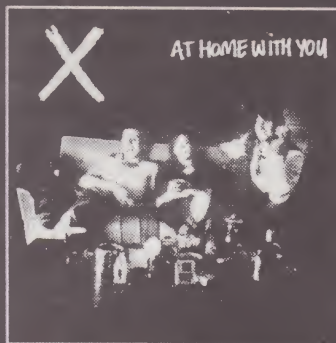
8 Huber quoted in an August 27, 1993 article in the *Wochen Zeitung* by Jürg Frischknecht.

9 Musa and al-Asi made news more recently when they participated in an October 31, 2001 "town meeting" held at Washington's National Press Club entitled "War on the Muslims/Attack on America." The meeting (broadcast by CNN) was sponsored by the New Black Panther Party, an organization founded by the late Khallid Muhammad after he was banished from the Nation of Islam for vitriolic attacks on Jews, Catholics, and whites that even Louis Farrakhan found too extreme.

10 For a more detailed examination of the Avalon Gemeinschaft, see the insert on the group.

11 See Alfred Jäger & Armin Wildermuth, eds., *Der Unbekannte Islam* (Zurich: Benziger, 1982).





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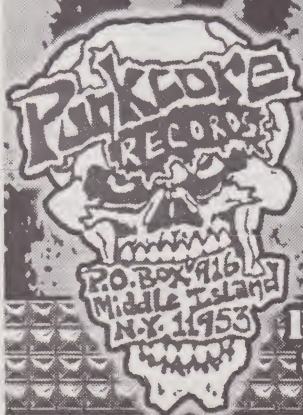
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# HIT SQUAD

## INSIDE MY BRAIN

**D**ateline: Sept. 10, 2001. I had been in the studio all day with my band, the RECKLESS BASTARDS, during which time we laid down 11 tracks, all recorded and mixed in a little less than 12 hours. The session had gone extremely well; it was very relaxed yet energetic. We'd planned on doing five songs, including our contribution to a SCREAMERS tribute CD, and



came out with 11 songs. Suffice it to say that we were all in great spirits when we left, with guitarist Zack and I coming home with CD-Rs of the session. I played it for my wife, Lisa, upon arriving home and felt very proud. I was so happy, I listened to it again through headphones after Lisa went to bed, as I made copies for singer/guitarist August and bassist Joe to pick up the next day. The next morning I awoke around 8:00 with that feeling of "Man, what a great day! I can't wait for August to stop by and hear this!" I made some coffee and went into the office to check my email, when suddenly Lisa came running in, frantically screaming "Oh my god, a plane hit the World Trade Center! It's on the news!" I quickly followed her into the living room where the TV was showing the first tower in flames. The news switched to coverage of yet another downed plane, this time one that crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. And, as if that wasn't enough, we were whisked back in NYC, where a second aircraft had hit Tower Two. Then the second tower collapsed, and a little while later, the first also collapsed. Then came the news that a plane had crashed into the Pentagon! I couldn't believe it. What was going on? Shortly thereafter, the phone rang and it was August, who sounded completely devastated. It had really hit close to home for him, as he hails from upstate New York and later lived in NYC for awhile.

For the rest of the day, I was glued to various news channels, trying to take it all in. Lisa, meanwhile had to go to work, so I was calling her every half hour with updates. All day long the phone rang, as friends checked in to talk and just try to make some sense of the whole thing. But sense is the last thing you can make of something like this. Up until then, the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building a few years back was probably the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil that I'd seen in my lifetime. I continued to see the footage of planes smashing into the Twin Towers, over and over. It looked like a special effect from some action film,

except that this was real. I volleyed back and forth between tears and complete anger over the situation, and at the same time I wondered about friends of mine who lived in NYC and worked near, or even in, one of those towers. As the day unfolded, I sent emails out and made some calls to friends, and was relieved to hear back from most of them that they were okay. Later that day, August came by to hear our CD, and noted the odd foreboding nature of one of the songs we'd recorded. It was a song I'd written called "Stimulate Our Minds," and it addressed the news media's habit of sensationalizing what are often enough already tragic events.

And of course, the NYC disaster was no different. For the next while, we were treated to a barrage of misinformation, rumors, speculation and, in some cases, the outright preying of people on other people's fears. The Internet, which is often enough a bastion of false info, became a breeding ground for this type of behavior. Emails began circulating telling people to light candles on certain nights so that NASA could take pictures from space of them, which is of course impossible. Other emails claimed that if you forwarded their advert to ten other people, the emails would be tracked and you'd somehow be donating money to the relief cause — also impossible. Spam emails appeared for "protective devices, guaranteed to protect you from terrorist attack.." Claims circulated that bin Laden had been killed by an angry American over in Afghanistan, that a police officer "rode" the stairs in the collapsing building down 85 flights to safety, and that a buried SUV with five firefighters still alive had been found. Statements made by people like George Carlin (!) and Michael Moore who allegedly condoned the attacks were also circulated, even though it was proven later that these were faked and simply the result of someone trying to stir up trouble. All of these were disproved, but you'd be surprised how many people actually believed them. A good place to check out these, and other ridiculous rumors spread over the Internet, is on [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com).

Then, of course, there was the media itself. How many times did you see the planes crashing into the Twin Towers? 5? 25? 100? The day of the attack alone, I must've seen it 50 times. Finally, I had to stop watching it altogether. There's only so much footage you can see for the umpteenth time, and only so much analysis by "experts" you can watch. The flipside of all this, of course, was the general public's responses. From the über-leftist attitude that "we deserved this" to the extreme right wing reaction of wanting to round up American Muslims and place them in internment camps and nuke Afghanistan. On the day of mourning, I saw two interesting things: a pickup truck, covered in US flags, driving slowly by my workplace, with a banner attached reading "Kill all Muslims Now," and a protest just up the street by the International Socialist Party, where a bunch of lefties carried signs with slogans like "America is the real terrorist" and "We had it coming." Thus, I think it's fair to say that people are polarized about the situation.

But what about Patriotism? Okay, here's my two hundred cents: There's nothing wrong with supporting the country, but some of this rah-rah, knee-jerk überpatriotism and "let's nuke Afghanistan" thinking just proves how uninformed a lot of US citizens are. Perhaps if the US wants to stop dealing



with terrorism, they should stop funding terrorists. Bush's father's administration gave people like bin Laden funding! What the hell were they thinking? I'm a pretty patriotic guy, and I'm not even American, but I consider the U.S. my "adopted" country. The day of the attacks, I went and gave blood. I have a US flag flying on my balcony. On the day of mourning, I wore my American flag sneakers and pants to work. It was also me who pointed out that they had the flag hanging the wrong way (backwards!) in the lobby of my workplace. That said, though, it was annoying to see some of these "super patriotic" mouthpieces on TV going on and on about how the U.S. has never gone into a country that "didn't want us there," or how "the U.S. has never killed innocent people" is absurd. Hello? Native Americans? Japanese internment camps? Hiroshima? Nagasaki? Vietnam? I would much rather that these guys simply said, "Look, we've done some horrible things in the past and haven't always used the best judgment, but we've learned and tried to stand for freedom and democracy." Or something like that. I think you can be a patriot and love your country but still be critical and see "the big picture." There is the ugly side to the nationalism that often rears its head during times like this. Many speak of "seeking justice" for the atrocities of Sept. 11, but where is the justice for all the other people dying in wars and conflicts all across this earth? War is, simply put, about power. It's not about "freedom" or "democracy." It's also about greed, nationalism, revenge, and hatred. Murdering in the name of some "God" or "freedom" is simply an excuse, a way of rationalizing the fact that we, as humans, tend to kill each other over disagreements in philosophy, religion, and politics. It's very convenient for us to choose to be on the "right" side of a war. Then we can justify murdering people whose only crime is living in the wrong country with the wrong ideology or religion.

When I posted something similar to this on an Internet newsgroup I'm on, a notorious opponent of mine eloquently chimed in as usual, calling me a "Communist" and a "lefty tree-hugger." He argued that I didn't know what I was talking about and that Communist countries had done far more horrible stuff than the U.S., and suggested (in his usual non-eloquent fashion using language I won't repeat here) that I read more about Communist travesties. Unbeknownst to him, I already have. I'm quite familiar with the horror of most Communist regimes. I believe in freedom, not suppression. Despite what he seemed to think, I am not a Communist or a Socialist. I am also by no means aligned with much of that pseudo-hippie tree hugger thinking. In fact, I tend to avoid all forms of "isms," though I do follow a fairly Humanist philosophy. Actually, I read four or five books a month on a variety of subjects, often those of a political nature. In fact, right at this moment I'm finishing up one on the history and atrocities of the Taliban by Ahmed Rashid. Personally, I have little respect for hardline Muslim

Fundamentalists — or any kind of Fundamentalists for that matter. I have a hard time respecting a religion and/or ruling government which doesn't allow women any rights and was busily denying many of its own people food. All I was trying to point out is that all countries do some terrible things, including the U.S. I don't think that justifies or even excuses what happened. Those terrorists are cowards, despite the line by some people that they were in fact "brave" because they were willing to die for their cause. They are cowards because they attack and hide, and they attacked innocent people — people who had no reason to be attacked in such a way and people with no means of fighting back. To me, that is cowardice.

Getting back to the patriotism thing, my main problem is that so many are simply using it as an excuse to promote their own commercialized agenda. Jeez, even Miss Cleo is

using it! When I see ads on TV for the "American Patriot Collection" consisting of mugs, plates, desk organizers, etc., being sold, I have to wonder. When the flag is being used to hawk everything from fast food to jeans to cars, I have to wonder. When the flag is reduced to simply being a means to sell crap to people by exploiting their patriotism, then something is amiss!!

The next horrible thing to happen was on Oct. 29th. GEORGE HARRISON, "the quiet BEATLE," finally succumbed to cancer. I was very sad. I knew he was going to die, but when it finally hap-

pened and I saw the headline in that morning's paper, I cried. The BEATLES were/are a major influence in my life. The first album I ever bought with my own money, at the age of 12, was "Abbey Road." I was a BEATLES fan from a young age, and they were one of the first rock 'n' roll bands I really got into. My parents were BEATLES fans, so I had been hearing them from a very early age. As I got older, the BEATLES influence stayed with me. I soon had all their albums, and began collecting BEATLES bootlegs, which I still do to this day. HARRISON wrote a lot of my fave songs, too: "Taxman", "If I Needed Someone", "Blue Jay Way", "Don't Bother Me", "I Want To Tell You", "It's All Too Much", "Only A Northern Song", "Piggies", "The Inner Light", "Think For Yourself", "While My Guitar Gently Weeps", and "Within You Without You." HARRISON seemed like a gentle person, albeit with a sarcastic sense of humor, and yet he retained a sense of amazingly hopeful optimism, as evidenced by an interview he gave VH1 back in '97, which I happened to catch recently. Truth be told, I've never been much of a fan of his post-BEATLES solo work (or, for that matter, of any of the BEATLES' solo work, excepting a few tunes here and there), but I still respected him a lot. His company, Handmade

***It was annoying to see some of these "super patriotic" mouthpieces on TV going on and on about how the U.S. has never gone into a country that "didn't want us there."***



# HIT SQUAD

Films, was also responsible for a couple of my fave movies: "The Life of Brian" and "Time Bandits." GEORGE, you will be missed!

Perhaps that would be a good segue to get back to the topic of music, which is what this column is supposed to be about! As I mentioned, I've been collecting BEATLES boots for years now, and there are a couple of recent releases that might warrant your attention. Incidentally, these releases are from the very early BEATLES period. If you're at all a fan of the MILKSHAKES, DUKES OF HAMBURG, or the KAISERS, you might be aware that their sound was influenced a great deal by the early BEATLES' "Hamburg Period." That is, when they were still dressing in black leather and pounding out 50's rock 'n' roll and rhythm and blues covers to rowdy drunk Germans. Since the late '70s, a small amount of live Star Club material recorded by an amateur recording enthusiast has been released in a multitude of formats, after said master reels were copied and recopied, often in a completely slipshod fashion, from lo-fi tape dupes, chopped up, and edited to varying degrees by quick buck makers with little regard for what the listener was getting. In recent years, not only have the legitimate masters been relocated, but even more material that was thought for years to be lost has been found. It was all due for a legitimate release a few years ago, but ironically enough it was GEORGE HARRISON himself who put a stop to the release (both McCARTNEY and STARR said okay) for reasons known perhaps only to himself. Well, some ingenious engineer (as is often the case) must've snuck a tape of it all out and Secret Trax has released "The Star Club," a two-disc collection that is a revelation if there ever was one. First off, the sound is better than it was on all those "semi-legit" releases, but be aware that it's still pretty lo-fi. It also contains eight more songs than the original 32 tracks thought to have survived. Granted, one song, a killer take of "Red Hot", cuts out abruptly halfway through the song, so maybe that's only seven and a half new songs! While the sound is still admittedly a grotty affair — it was recorded on a primitive portable 4-track reel to reel machine, in mono — it is great stuff!

(By the way, for a long time people have thought that the Star Club tapes featured original drummer PETE BEST, but it is indeed RINGO although even the pics used for the Secret Trax release picture the line-up with BEST. The reason for that is, or so the story goes, that RINGO's involvement would date the recordings following their signing to EMI, thus making all releases of it an infringement of their ownership of any BEATLES material recorded after that date. To quell that fear, most semi-legit releases of said material in the past claimed that it was BEST playing on it, thus allowing them to date it from before their EMI contract which, due legal loopholes, made it releasable. Regardless, it is indeed RINGO manning the drums, but until the insanely detailed research done by Hans Olof Gottfridsson, author of the fantastic book "The Beatles' Star Club Years," which proved that RINGO had played on it, it was assumed that it was BEST because of the recording dates commonly given. Even so, it was recorded on the proclaimed date — December of '62 — and RINGO did play on it.)

PETE BEST appears on the next item I wanted to mention, Bear Family's double CD set of Hamburg recordings. These include the first ever appearance of the Fab Four on vinyl, backing up their pal TONY SHERIDAN (who, incidentally, guest sings "Money" on the Star Club set) on the now legendary "My Bonnie/The Saints Go Marchin' In" single. The BEATLES, billed as the BEAT BROTHERS, backed SHERIDAN up on some more stuff and also recorded two tunes on their own: "Ain't She Sweet" and the first BEATLES original, a HARRISON-LENNON intro called "Cry For A Shadow." After they hit it big some of this material was, like the Star Club stuff, released by a variety of budget cash-in labels, as "Rare Early BEATLES," "Savage Young BEATLES," "Die BEATLES In Hamburg," and so forth. The unfortunate problem with a lot of it was that labels took it upon themselves to "modernize" these admittedly primitive recordings by adding unnecessary reverb and echo and, in some cases, superfluous overdubs of fake "yeah yeah's" and "ooohs" and handclaps, among other oddities. They also released the scant few tracks padded out often enough with other songs that featured TONY SHERIDAN without the BEATLES' involvement! Who they were trying to fool? While there have been other releases that were made up of the original, unadorned material, Bear Family has done a remarkable job by not only going back to the original session tapes, but by including the different mixes/versions of all the tunes. The package consists of an LP-size box containing a 120-page hardcover book on the recordings, plus a two-CD set featuring one disc of mono versions and the other of stereo mixes! Amazing as it may seem, it was originally recorded in stereo (this was Germany, after all!) but then later mixed in mono for release, as that was the primary format at the time. Some of the mixes and/or alternate versions are presented on this set for the first time ever.

While I'm on the subject of things that were once bootlegged becoming legitimate releases, I thought I'd follow up on the WHO's "Complete Live At Leeds" boot CD. As mentioned last issue, I compared this awesome double CD to the legit counterpart on MCA which, while expanded from the original 1970 "Live At Leeds" LP, still didn't contain the complete concert, which the boot does. Nor does the boot have any additional "post-production" tinkering done to it. Well, lo and behold, MCA issued the "Live At Leeds Deluxe" double CD set a few months ago. While it now has the complete show, it still has some of the editing/dubbing done on the first reissue. I can understand doing that to fix some parts where the tape distorted the sound, or to fix some sound dropouts, etc., but to completely redo bass, guitar, or vocal parts seemed rather unnecessary to me. Also, all the "Tommy" songs have been relegated to the second disc, so it kind of breaks up the show. Comparatively speaking, I still think the boot, although slightly marred by some minor distortion in places and the occasional sound dropout, has the edge over the MCA issue.

I also found out recently that SHEL TALMY and the WHO Organization have finally come to an agreement over the TALMY-produced material on their first LP and various singles. TALMY has owned the master tapes ever since 1965, and has never relinquished them to MCA. Apparently, TALMY will be mixing the material into stereo for the first time ever, and a reissue of the first WHO LP, complete with bonus material, will be hitting the stores next year. For more info, check out <http://www.sheltalmy.com/whotapes.htm>.



Those of you who would prefer the material to remain in mono (as it was originally released) might want to check out the exquisite "Instant Party" double CD on Hi Watt. This bootleg release includes all the WHO A and B sides from 1965-73 singles, most of which are in mono. While there's not much info about the sources used, it does say "includes the TALMY mixes," which leads me to believe they somehow got access to the tapes, or at least a very good copy of the tapes, as the sound is utterly superb! Another thing about this release is the amazing packaging. It comes in fold-out slip-cases, picture sleeves for the CDs, three really fat booklets full of pics and reprinted articles from the 1970s, and a set of postcards! It's a rather pricey set, but is well worth it.

Recently I was sent a CD by THE UNKNOWN MYSTERY '60's GROUP. If you're unfamiliar with the story, here it is: a few years ago, DAVE BROWN of Distortions Records found a tape at a flea market of some 60's combo doing some psychedelia that sounded sort of like a cross between the BEATLES, the HOLLIES, and BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD. He tried getting info about who was responsible, to no avail, and so he released it as THE UNKNOWN MYSTERY '60s GROUP. Recently, the guys at a new label called Octopus, which had picked up where DAVE left off, located the former drummer, now living in Spain. It turns out that these guys also had some more unreleased stuff, which he agreed to let them release as long as the band still remained anonymous. Musically, the disc presents more of the same style of tuneage, albeit with a more country-ish edge, but is rather engaging nonetheless. The thing that struck me was, if these guys recorded this in the '60s, then why are there references to events surrounding the SON OF SAM and JIM JONES, both of which occurred in the late '70s?

I emailed label rep SYLVESTER HOCKLEY and asked him about this, and he responded, "When DAVE PLUM and myself approached the drummer in the band, he led us to believe that the recordings spanned the '60s and the '70s. I tend to believe him on that because of variation in recording sound quality and techniques. However, we aren't trying to pull a fast one and pass this off as a pure 60's recording, since we clearly state on the CD that you'll hear both '60's and '70's styles. It made sense to keep the name THE UNKNOWN MYSTERY '60s GROUP, since people were already familiar with the first CD. That's all I can say for now. We're currently trying to get a little more info out of THE UNKNOWN about their history, influences, etc. We'll see what happens." That said, I'd love to know exactly who is responsible for this stuff. Was it really recorded in the '60s, '70s, and possibly even the '80s? Or was it recorded more recently? Is it even the same band as the one on the original Distortions release? Perhaps one day we'll finally find out!

Speaking of cool '60s bands, I have long had a penchant for 60's psychedelic acts put out by the Mainstream label in the mid-to-late '60s. Mainstream was responsible for releasing the first LP by BIG BROTHER & THE HOLDING COMPANY as well as the first two by the AMBOY DUKES. They also released stellar albums by the BOHEMIAN VENDETTA, the GROWING CONCERN, and the ORIENT EXPRESS. All of these have seen re-release in the last few years, either legitimately or as bootlegs. The TANGERINE ZOO, a band originally from Rhode Island, took matters into their own hands and have re-released their two Mainstream albums themselves. They have a website, which is part of the MP3.com site at [www.mp3.com/tangerinezoo](http://www.mp3.com/tangerinezoo). You can down-

load songs, see lots of cool pics, and read more info about the group. Bassist TONY "THE TIGER" TAVEIRA was nice enough to send me the two re-releases: TANGERINE ZOO's "First Album" and "Outside Looking In". Both are chock full of primo acid-psych, searing fuzz guitar, hypnotic bass work, and great organ playing. They even have a live release, recorded at a 1991 reunion show, that's about to come out called "Reincarnated Live". They are also planning on putting out another CD of previously unreleased '60's recordings that never saw the light of day back then. Check 'em out!

I wanted to mention a new fave website of mine, [www.punk77.co.uk](http://www.punk77.co.uk). Run by PAUL MARKO, this British site is chock full of cool info on well-known and not-so-well-known punk bands from the '70s. Paul also makes available on CD-R tons of rare live, studio, and Peel Session material by bands like MENACE, the PACK, the NIPPLE ERECTORS, the VACANTS, the BEARS, WIRE, the CRABS, the STRAPPS, GENERATION X, the KILLJOYS, SIOUXIE & THE BANSHEES, BLONDIE, PATTI SMITH, the UNWANTED, EATER, ADAM & THE ANTS, the SEX PISTOLS, the CLASH, and others.

Last issue, I mentioned my excitement over the impending new Star Trek show, "Enterprise", which I have been watching and have not been disappointed in. It's grittier than shows like "Voyager", the characters seem closer to people of our own time, the technology is far less advanced, and the shows seem a lot more action-packed. I think SCOTT BAKULA is great as Captain Archer, full of wonder and a naïve "dogooder" attitude. T'Pol is a great Vulcan, somewhat icy and cold, but the woman playing her, JOLENE BLALOCK, is one sexy gal! Then you've got CONNOR TRINNEER as the Cocky, Southern-accented Chief Engineer Charles Tucker III; DOMENIC KEATING as Lt. Malcolm Reed, a British security guy that's really into weaponry but seems pretty cool-headed; ANTHONY MONTGOMERY as Ensign Travis Mayweather, a "space boomer" who was born on a cargo ship; LINDA PARK as Ensign Hoshi Sato, a communications officer who doesn't even like being on the ship; and lastly, JOHN BILLINGSLEY as Dr. Phlox, the wacky Denobulan, who provides comic relief. Overall, there's more humor in this show than previous "new" Treks, which I like very much. Some folks have complained that the show looks too "modern," and seems more advanced than the original Star Trek series, but c'mon — that show was made 30 years ago, on a shoestring budget! The technology on Star Trek looks retro considering the scientific advancements in computers, communications, and so forth that have happened since 1969. I think the producers have done a pretty fine job making it look far less advanced than shows like "The Next Generation", "Deep Space 9", and "Voyager", yet not so cheesy that it would be laughable. Plus, they've already brought back, from the Original Series, the hyper-paranoid, blue-skinned Andorians, who now sport moving antennae thanks to improved costuming and special effects.

I really don't have a whole lot more to talk about this column. If you want to contact me, feel free to do so at [dothepop@ix.netcom.com](mailto:dothepop@ix.netcom.com), or write me at: 1011 Boren Ave., #114, Seattle, WA 98104. See ya next time! ☎

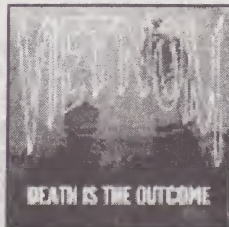




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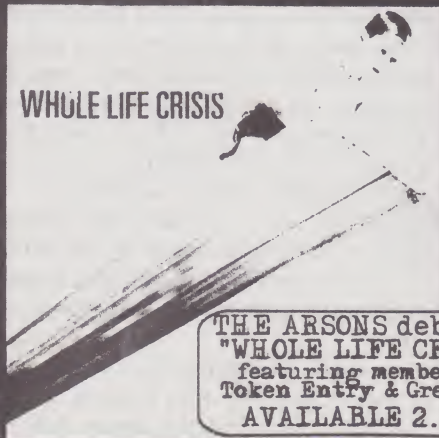
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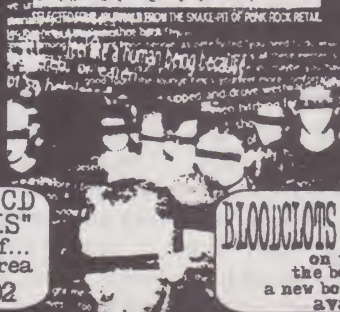
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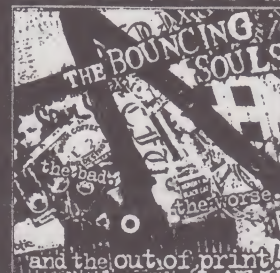


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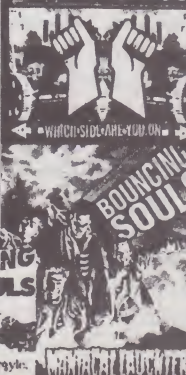
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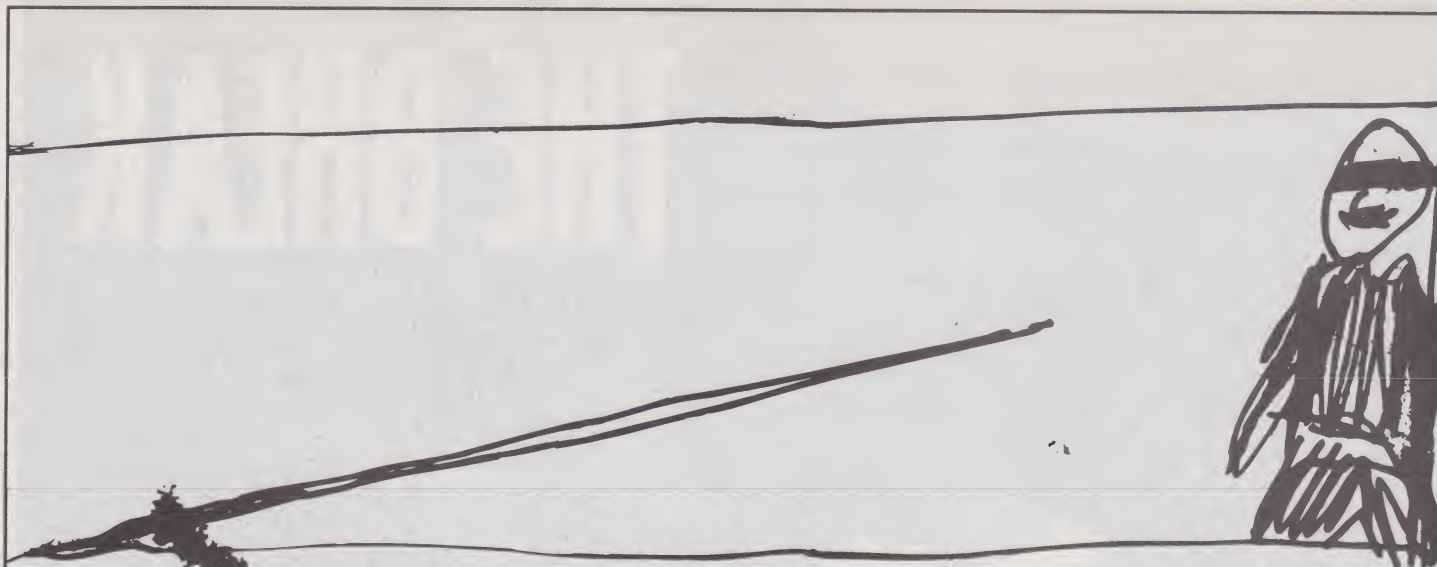
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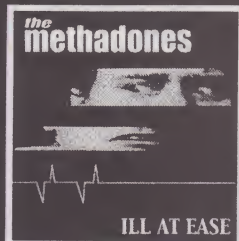
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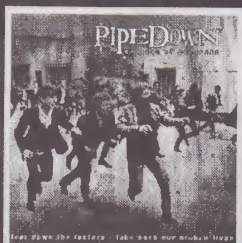
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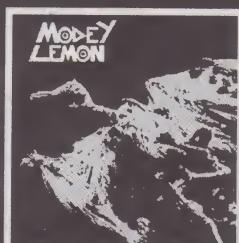
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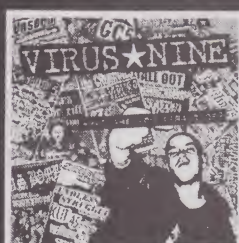
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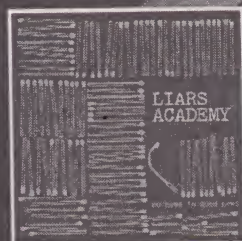


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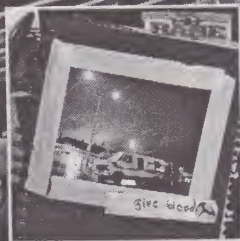


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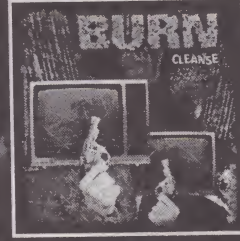
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# Trash Brats

## AMERICA'S ONLY ROCKNROLL BAND: THE TRASH BRATS STORY

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I PROBABLY DON'T NEED TO SPELL IT ALL OUT FOR MANY OF YOU ALREADY-SAVVY *HIT LIST* READERS – WHAT A PISS-POOR, ALL-TIME-LOW, SORRY ASS-STATE POPULAR MUSIC'S IN AS A RESULT OF THE PROFIT-DRIVEN STRANGLEHOLD THE CORPORATIONS HAVE ON ALL MASS-MEDIA, BUT HOPEFULLY SOME OF YOU MORE-DISCRIMINATING LEATHER JACKETS HAVE ALSO NOTICED HOW OUR UNDERGROUND IS SIMILARLY IN A STEADY DECLINE.



**THE SAME RULES APPLY OUT HERE – WHOEVER HAS THE MOST MONEY IS ABLE TO GAIN THE MOST VISIBILITY AND THEREFORE APPEAR TO BE THE MOST POPULAR. MY BULLSHIT DETECTOR'S BEEN GOING OFF ALMOST NON-STOP LATELY, WITH THIS TREND OF ABSOLUTE GARBAGE BEING "POPULARIZED" BY PAINFULLY-MISGUIDED MINI-MOGUL'S MONEY-MACHINES, WHICH ARE MISTAKENLY PROPELLING THE CAREERS OF HERE-TODAY-GONE-LATER-TODAY, HAIR METAL-GOES-PUNK SHYSTERS ON BOTH COASTS. SHAMELESSLY DESECRATING THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE REAL ROCK'N'ROLL SUBCULTURE WITH THEIR HIRE-IN GIMMICKRY, STORE-BOUGHT COSTUMES, AND BIG PRODUCTION BUDGETS, THESE OPPORTUNISTIC HACKS, WHO ARE NOW ALL CLAIMING THIS SUDDEN AFFINITY FOR MICHIGAN'S CLASSIC PROTO-PUNK BANDS, ARE SADLY ABLE TO CONFUSE CIVILIANS AND GIVE THE SINCERE AND MORE-TALENTED PURVEYORS OF GLAM-TRASH-POP OR PUNK'N'ROLL OR REAL ROCK'N'ROLL, OR WHATEVER YOU WANNA CALL IT, A BAD NAME.**

We live in a world-gone-wrong, where any trustafarian with big, curly hair playing wank-off guitar solos can garner comparisons to the righteous, revolutionary spirit of the MC5. Where Aerosmith "jam" with N'Sync and Britney Spears, but nobody calls 'em on it. Where our once-beloved, badass rock bands have become institutions who write songs in the boardroom by committee. Where "That 70's Show"-type flares have become shorthand for hipster credibility, even though real hipsters never wore the damn things. But let's all just take a closer look at who's proclaiming themselves to be the discerning voices of what's hip. Mark my word - sooner or later, G.G. Allin's music will be used to sell cars to rich people in this country. Am I the only one feeling cheated?

In the meantime, and these have definitely been some mean times (and they're probably about to get even meaner)...Detroit Rock City's Only Authentic World's Forgotten Boys, the eminently-marketable, veteran TRASH BRATS, have stood alone for thirteen odd years as the last of the true, heroic underdogs: a ceaseless do-it-yourself rock'n'roll machine who've consistently defied seemingly insurmountable odds, year in and year out, blazing a trail of dames and ale across the lost horizon. These show-stop-

ping superheroes are in a class by themselves.

Say what you want about their make-up and dresses and sometimes unsavoury behaviors, the TRASH BRATS explode onto a stage like confetti from a cannon, like fireworks on the Fourth of July, and prove it every night that they're the best live act in rock'n'roll since Hanoi Rocks. Boasting the most charismatic, energetic frontman this side of cock-rock, the mischievous, musical, beautiful androgyne, BRIAN O'BIVION; one of the all-time greatest guitar-stars with an unusual knack for anthemic songwriting, Ricky Rat; the dangerous, punk-as-fuck bassist, Toni Romeo, with his reputation for indecent-exposure and self-abuse; and even their thunderous, big-rock drummer, Craig Cashew, a born showman! I keep waiting for the Todd McFarlane/TRASH BRATS action figures. The Ricky Rat Pez Dispenser. The opening spot on the original Van Halen Reunion World Tour, but you know me, I'm always dreamin' that there's some justice in this world.

On their brand new album, "American Disaster", out on Storm Records, the Trash Brats have finally successfully captured some of their on-stage lightning in a bottle in the studio, and come up with a broad range of catchy, original songs that'll still hold up years from now, from the bleating stooge-punk of "Rocket To Heaven", to the tear-jerking country-honk of "Migrant Woman", to the summery bubblegum of the Brats' own original, often-imitated, never duplicated, brand of arena-ready, romanticidal, teen-spirited rock'n'roll, the Trash Brats demonstrate, here again, the all-too-obvious fact that not only are they virtually peerless at this moment in time, but that they are indeed the rightful heirs of Detroit's once rich and proud musical legacy, the actual bastard sons of the MC5 and Alice Cooper Band. Ladies and Gentleman, I bring you, live from the Motor City, America's Only

Rock'n'roll Band...the TRASH BRATS!

## LIL' CHILDHOOD DREAMS...

**BRIAN:** The first thing that made me pick up a guitar was Bruce Springsteen's video, "Rosalita". He looked like he was having a lot of fun, and girls were throwing themselves at him. That looked like a pretty good deal. That's when I bought into the cult. A good buddy of my Dad's, John, who played in the Michigan Cavaliers, one of the area's top polka bands, helped pick out my first guitar. He told me about "the axe" I was about to get, and I wasn't hip to the lingo, so I thought I was gonna get one like Gene Simmons had. I was kind of disappointed when it turned out to be an Ibanez. My amp was a 1973 Montgomery Ward with two knobs - volume and tone.

**RICKY:** The first rock and roll band that really did it for me when I was a kid, was without a doubt KISS. I was already in love with 70's poprock radio - everything from the K-Tel classics, tunes like "Chevy Van", "Sky High", "Saturday Night",





"Seasons In The Sun", etc., to funk-disco stuff like Parliament, KC & the Sunshine Band, Ohio Players, etc., to hardrock/glam groups like Aerosmith, Alice Cooper Band, and the Sweet, but upon getting my copy of KISS' "Destroyer" in Spring of 1976, oh, fuck - that did it all! I remember I was helping my Dad do yard work in exchange for like, an allowance, and I was able to pick up one 45 record from the local Kresge. Well, I wanted "Shout It Out Loud", the new KISS song they were playing like crazy all over the radio - AM and

FM. They were out of it and we had to go to the local Korvettes department store - again no single, but they had the whole new KISS album, "Destroyer," on special for \$3.99. I begged my Dad to get it for me, and Bless Him, he did. I don't think he knew what he was starting. It may sound goofy, but from then on in, I KNEW what I wanted to do! I was into both music and sports at that time, being nine or so, but music won out before long, when I got my first guitar for Christmas when I was thirteen and in junior high, right around

the time when me and Brian first met...

**BRIAN:** I first wanted to play drums but my Dad told me, "You can't play no polkas on the drums," so the coronet it was. I also played organ for a couple of years. I quit because I got bored having to practice, and reading music took so much concentration. I wish I'd stuck with it, I'd be a prodigy by now.

**RICKY:** Me and Brian met in the seventh gradé. We had each other in like, five out of six classes. So it was like, "Oh, there's that Brian kid again..." The first time I remember us talking was when he gave me an article from the *Detroit Free Press* on Mr. Bill from "Saturday Night Live". We became best friends in Mr. Hole's third hour science class, we got kicked out of class sooo many times for just fuckin' around, doin' stupid shit, and became partners on a science project because no one else chose us and we got stuck - the last two in the room, no shit! The first thing we had in common was a shared sense of humour cultivated through too many episodes of "Saturday Night Live" and issues of *Mad*. We also shared alot of similar musical tastes, like BOB SEGER, VAN HALEN, TED NUGENT - pretty much what was big on Detroit radio.

So anyways, I had a guitar but didn't know how to play, and at this point I was still trying to play more sports and fit in. I'd even cut my hair for the first time since I was a little kid, I always had long hair from like the second through seventh grades, and Brian saved me from all that!

**BRIAN:** I started guitar lessons about the same time Ricky did. I assume he already



**"EVEN IN THOSE DAYS, WHEN ALL THE 80'S METAL BANDS BEGAN 'DRESSING UP,' WE STARTED GETTING LUMPED IN AS A 'HAIR BAND,' BUT WE WERE WAY TOO EXTREME FOR METAL CROWDS THAT LIKED THE MORE MACHO METAL STYLINGS OF MOTLEY CRÜE, RATT, GUNS N ROSES, L.A. GUNS, ETC., AND THOSE CROWDS HATED US IN THE MID- TO LATE 80'S."**



told you we met in Science. Did he tell you that our teacher, Mr. Hole, had a son named Harry? Kids all swore it was true. The first song I learned was "Cat Scratch Fever". Ricky and I were into the DOORS, AC/DC, TED NUGENT, and VAN HALEN. When my family moved to another town, we stayed in touch and sent each other tapes of songs we had learned and stuff that we had come up with. Once in a while, we'd spend the weekend at the other's house, and our main objective was to finish a tape of us playing together, it's the thing that kept me going until the next time we'd get together.

**RICKY:** During the holiday school breaks we would get together and jam with this drummer kid who lived across the street from me named Troy, who later played in the Brats as T.T. BARR...

**BRIAN:** Ricky and I discovered a lot of music together. Judas Priest, Saxon, Iron Maiden, Riot, Krokus, and pre-MTV Twisted Sister. We'd go record shopping and buy any album that had a picture of the band wearing leather or dressed wild. This method worked until I bought a Dokken (which only rhymes with rockin') album, and it really sucked.

**RICKY:** Distance fucked things up a bit, but we finally ended up in a band that had a chance to do bar gigs! It was me on guitar, this guy Dave singin', who we dug cuz he looked cool - the first guy we'd ever met who had jet black, ratted hair and wore make-up - and the drummer was named Chris. Chris would later become the first Brat drummer, and it was Brat that later became the Trash Brats...Chris' sister's boyfriend was friends with this huge metal/hardrock bar band that needed an opening act for an upcoming show. Up until then, we'd only played a few backyard parties and whatnot with whoever on bass, so I called Brian, and he was like, "Why don't we both switch back and forth between guitar and bass?" So, that's what we did, our first show ever - I'll never forget the date, it was Saturday, October 1st, 1983 at the Falcon Lounge on the East Side of Detroit at Van Dyke and Outer Drive, which is now a Burger King...

**BRIAN:** There were these underground metal comps called "U.S. Metal" that were great. They kinda remind me of what Sal from Electric Frankenstein is doing now with his comps - just trying to get the word out...Ricky and I discovered Motley Crüe together - I think Rick's still got a copy of their first independant release on

tape - we got into that heavily! I still think that first album is great. Even, or, especially, the production. It's alive. I think they lost something after that first one. We really dug their image, too - long hair, flashy, and exuding the kind of attitude that said "Fuck You." That's what we wanted to be and say.

**RICKY:** We were pretty bad, but just glad to be playing in a bar - we were just barely 16, with our new driver's licenses and in our junior year of high school. Well, one gig led to another and another, and we were still called Asylum until 1984, but our singer Dave kept wanting to play guitar in a "heavier band," and we wanted to be more rock'n'roll or whatever, so he split in the spring. The three of us - me, Brian, and Chris - took a few months off, then regrouped and came back later that summer as BRAT. Brat was less on the metal/hardrock side, since we were going more for the punky, glammy, catchy stuff, I guess. We were playing everything from GIRLSCHOOL to PLASMATICS to KISS to SWEET to BLONDIE, hardly any originals thus far, just sets of covers...BRAT continued on, almost non-stop, except when switching drummers - a problem that lasted well into our TRASH BRATS days, with me and Brian taking turns singing, playing bass, and playing guitar, and we started getting better and better gigs, like opening for TEENAGE HEAD and the FORGOTTEN REBELS - cool, cool stuff! We were soon concentrating on writing our own material, and I said to Brian, "You've got the better voice - maybe you should just sing..." This was around '85 and '86, when we decided to shift to a four-piece. Our new drummer was Matt Smash and we got TONI ROMEO from JUST BORN, who had just broken up. He couldn't play bass at all, but fit in with us personally-wise and attitude-wise - he had always worn make-up and dressed up and was pissing off all these hostile punks in his two previous punk bands, HED and JUST BORN, and he kept askin' us if we needed a singer, and I was like, "Naw, the singer, but can you play bass at all?," and it turned out that he had a shit-guitar he used to pound chords out on, and attitude was way more important to me anyways. I just showed him a few things and boom, we were off! We played our first shows with him in the summer of 1987 as the TRASH BRATS, a much-improved name from BRAT, which was boring, or as Matt once said, "It sounds like a snake fart." We got the name TRASH BRATS from Big Bill, who we met in the Marlborough Street days. He kinda used to take care of

us, he'd buy us beer (since we weren't yet of legal age), food, toilet paper, y'know, the bare necessities. He'd gotten these stickers out of a bubblegum machine at K-Mart, and they were these cheap rip-offs of the "Garbage Pail Kids" stickers that were popular at the time, featuring characters with names like "Punky Paul" - and they were called TRASH BRATS.

### 3873 MARLBOROUGH STREET...

**RICKY:** We lived on Marlborough Street in our 1986 BRATS days, pre-Toni. Me and Brian were a bit naive when we moved into our first band house in a bad, bad drug-infested, fucked-up neighborhood on Detroit's Lower East Side - but the \$25 a week rent offered to us by "Wiggy" was too good to pass up when we could practice right downstairs. The Marlborough Street-era was a great time despite the fact that we lived with a junkie, got ripped off and broken into, etc. It seemed like a real inspired time, and this is where we wrote a lot of the songs that started shaping the direction of the band, and a lot of our early songs, "3873 Marlborough St.", "Gerri's Song", and "Gas Boy", came out of those experiences. I sat down with Toni and showed him the songs; of course he didn't know notes or chords, but that was a small thing to overcome. It was just "This one goes here...put your finger on the fifth fret, dah dah dah dah dah, then move it to the seventh fret, dah dah dah dah dah..."

We recorded our "first album", the infamous "Pink Tape", so named by people because of the pink cardstock cover, just as Toni joined the band, at an in-home eight-track studio. We dubbed the tapes ourselves, printed up the cheap covers, and even had an insert with lyrics, y'know, so it was this tape that got us our first reviews, like in *MRR*, and our first shows outside of Detroit. We for sure were into the total "D.I.Y" thing, just making up tapes, shirts, stickers, and going out and playing - fuck waiting for someone to come and "discover" ya. Our next band house came together in January of 1988. Me, Brian, and Toni all lived there. Once into the new place on Caldwell Street, we started having tons of parties, you know, the whole "band house" vibe. This helped draw more and more people to our shows and, of course, tons came over afterwards - a lot of times, people would be all lined up on our porch waiting for us by the time we got back from the club. Matt Smash was gone by early '88, we were all just not seeing eye to eye anymore. He was replaced by Jay Jones, a great drummer



and a great guy, who lasted all of about 2-3 months. We did some demos with him that have never seen the light of day, which we call "the Big Bill Sessions". The last straw for Jay (besides not really wanting to play in a "glam-punk" band) was a show we did in Muskegon, MI at this total D.I.Y. punk rock clubhouse called the Icepick, where the punks threw garbage, bottles, cans, beers, bb's, spit - you name it!

Adam Bomb came next and lasted for about a year. We recorded an entire album with him (that was never released) at this place called Garageland, using money we had saved up from playing shows. The place was run by this guy who was in a pretty successful local group at the time called Snakeout, a band in the Cramps-surfer garage vein. We were under the impression that he might put the album out if we recorded it there and he liked it, but nope - all he cared about was getting our money each day when he dropped by the sessions, which were engineered by Warren DeFever, who later went on to be in ELVIS HITLER and HIS NAME IS ALIVE. By the time the album was pretty much done we ran out of money, and it was never even mixed until recently - a few songs can be heard on the "9-Song Re-Release" as bonus tracks on the first 150 copies. We did lots of touring in '88-'89 and played some great shows with JOHNNY THUNDERS, DAG NASTY, ALL, and the GOO GOO DOLLS, but Adam was out by fall of '89. He was briefly replaced by Jimmy "Vegas" Palluzzi, who would later re-join the band and stay with us for three years or so, until he quit to join Sponge after they got their deal. Then, in 1990, it was the "Re-emergence of T.T. Barr", the first drummer Brian and I had ever played with, so it seemed to be fate or something. In 1990, we recorded what was to become known as the "9 Song" tape or album, our first official release on the pretty cool local punk label, Force Majeure Records. The SWINGIN' UTTERS first stuff was also on that label, and we put out a seven-inch and a full-length tape, but vinyl never materialized due to lack of funds.

## SUIT OF ARMOUR

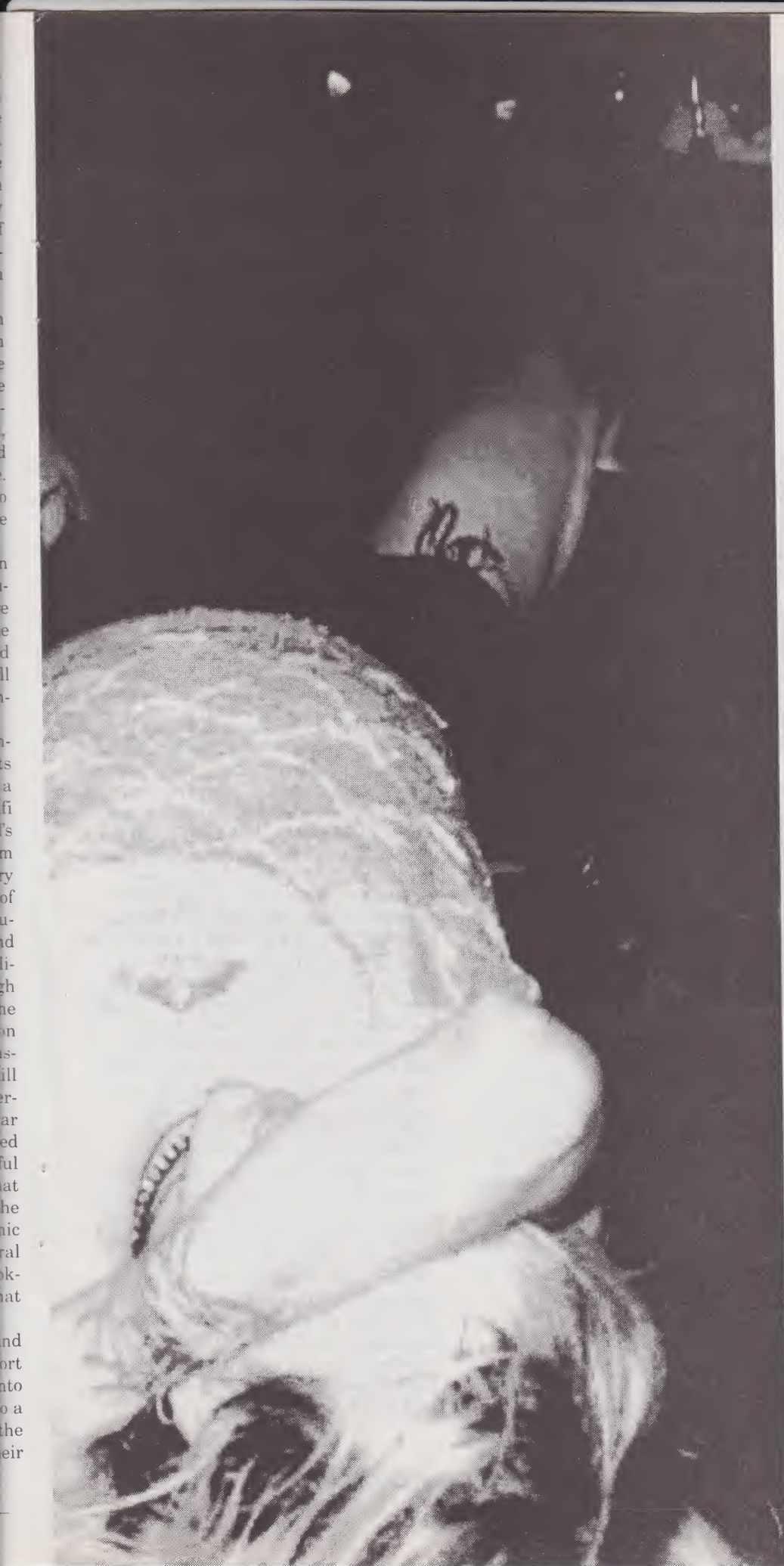
**RICKY:** Me and Brian started dressing up when we were like 15 or so, when we liked bands like KISS, ALICE COOPER BAND, SWEET, and the N.Y.DOLLS. We wore lots of silly make-up and made awful attempts to "dress wild". It was something when I first walked into school with my

hair dyed black and wearing make-up, and I got shit for it all the time, so basically, high school was a living hell most of the time. I was too weird for the burntout metalheads or the New Wave punks, but there was a small group of us who were all different or weird in our own ways, and we used to hang together a lot listening to the SEX PISTOLS, N.Y.DOLLS, GENERATION X, etc., and going to see the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" almost every weekend. I swear that that movie just about saved my life during those rough high school times - I painted "Don't Dream It - Be It" on my beat-up Cutlass when I graduated.

Anyways, I guess you could say that there was a strong reaction to our appearance from Day One. Even in those days, when all the 80's metal bands began "dressing up," we started getting lumped in as a "hair band," but we were way too extreme for metal crowds that liked the more macho metal stylings of Motley Crüe, Ratt, Guns N Roses, L.A. Guns, etc., and those crowds hated us in the mid- to late 80's. People are always saying that we have "big hair" and that kinda junk, but actually I am the only one in the band who rats his hair. We used to get into fights and get kicked out of bars all the time, and this would be at punk and metal clubs and shows. The Punk and New Wave/Alternative scene, whatever you wanna call it in the mid 80's, took us in first. Of course, the skinheads and "hard-core" punks were exactly the same as the macho metalheads, but with different haircuts, and in both cases it easily crossed over into that jock macho shit. Either way, they always harrassed us, and there were a few shows where we actually had to leave the stage because we were just getting bombarded with too much shit. We opened for L.A. GUNS in Cincinnati, right as they were hitting their peak. The place was packed, but the crowd HATED us! They were trying to hit us with cherry bombs and wine cooler bottles - of course, we ended up making friends with a lot of people who thought we were cool, but for the most part it was a bad bill for us to be on. We were always too "glam" for the punks and too punk for the glam-metallers. But we forged on and before long we had our own crowd, which crossed over into a lot of different scenes, and that's when our shows started getting cooler and cooler. It's so funny that people put us into that whole 80's Hollywood/Lip-Service Dagger-Pants/Badboy-Glam-Metal category, 'cuz if you look at pictures of us even in our worst fashion nightmares, we never looked or sounded anything like







that. We thought of our look as "thrift-store glitter."

But we've always known that KISS and Motley Crüe were FUN, too - it's taken a long time for people to think it's "cool" to rock'n'roll again. We always liked dressing up and looking like we were in a rock'n'roll band, as opposed to looking like any ol' person on the street or some college nerd or something. In the 90s so many bands downplayed the whole rock'n'roll lifestyle, but come on! Wouldn't you rather have a bunch of cute girls and guys up front, havin' a good time, instead of those bald, bearded macho assholes slammin' around or those jaded "I'm too cool to have fun" types? I know we would! For us it's always been about having a Good Time regardless of what the cool-code said about whether you were punk or metal or whatever. I really think people are ready for bands to start acting and looking like the stars they are, as opposed to all that phony "indie-cred" bullshit.

#### TRAP DOOR

**RICKY:** We are obviously fans of the N.Y. Dolls, so it was really cool to be able to play with and meet both of these cats, Johnny and Syl. We opened for Johnny Thunders the last time he played Detroit, in the fall of '89. He used my amp, almost blew it up, hit on my girlfriend at the time - y'know, what more could you expect from one of your big guitar heroes, right? He was really awful and fucked-up that night - one of those times when ya feel more sorry for him. It was a good argument against heavy drug use. I thought, "Man, I don't EVER wanna be like this onstage!" You gotta love him though for all his great songs, playing, and all the heart he poured into rock'n'roll. It's just too bad all these idiots glorify him just 'cause he was a mess...that just wasn't it with him at all, some people will never get it. We played with Syl twice here in Detroit recently, and he was really cool, despite his somewhat lacklustre bands. We've talked about touring with him, and being his band and opening up for him, but nothing's come of it yet.

#### FEEDING THE MOSQUITOS

**RICKY:** When we opened up for L.A. Guns at Bogarts, and the place was packed with people hating us for the most part, we finished our set and wanted to just have fun. I remember we had to get ready in the basement as L.A. Guns took





**IT SUCKS TO HAVE TO STRUGGLE TO GET ALBUMS OUT AND TO HAVE TO TOUR ON SUCH A DESPERATE, SHOESTRING BUDGET, WHILE ALL THESE OTHER GROUPS HAVE BIG RECORDING BUDGETS AND LABEL SUPPORT AND DON'T EVEN APPRECIATE IT. TO ME THE WHOLE "LIVE FAST/DIE YOUNG" STUFF MAYBE APPEALED TO ME WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, BUT NOW IT'S ALL JUST ABOUT SURVIVAL.**

both dressing rooms, one for their roadie-blowjob room or something. So we had to get dressed in the dirty basement, and us and a few of our friends from Detroit were drinkin' and pissing down there cus we were too lazy to walk up the flight of stairs. Anyway, I don't know who thought of it first, but all of the L.A. Guns drum-cases were down there, so we popped them open and lined them up like urinals and used them to piss in. When we were ready to move on out, we closed them back up. There was a killer after-show open bar at this nearby club. The owner came by and said he wanted both bands and their crews and friends to come by and have a huge drink tab. Well, ya don't have to tell us twice - this was the first time we'd ever enjoyed such "rock star" treatment, and us

and all our friends and everyone we grabbed to go with us took FULL advantage of it! We even got to have some people bounced that were fuckin' with us - it was a great show and a fun night. L.A. Guns never showed, and we figured they got to do stuff like that all the time, but for us it was a big deal. We had a blast, even though most of their crowd wanted to kill us.

#### **NICE GIRL TO VISIT**

**RICKY:** We did a little mini-tour with JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS in 1996, and then we played with them here in Detroit last summer. It was really great

to play with her and the guys - she's super-cool and we got high with her in our van. It was so weird. I was thinking, "This is JOAN JETT sitting here with us getting high!" Very, very cool...everyone in the band and their crew were very cool to us, and we had a ball with THOMMY PRICE and the rest of the BLACKHEARTS by going out to clubs after the shows and just takin' over the stage to do some jamming - Joan is more mellow, and doesn't like to go out after the gigs, but Tommy and the boys were always up for fun and we had a blast with them. Especially playing with them here in our hometown in front of 8,000-10,000 people on the fourth of July last year. A lot of our friends, family, and local fans were pretty proud of us that night. It almost seemed like we'd finally "made it". It was a great feeling to be on that Pine Knob Music Theatre and be looking out and thinking about all the concerts we saw here over the years, growing up, and then to find ourselves up there. Words can't describe...

#### **BEELZEBUB CLUB**

**RICKY:** We've been doing these "club nights" called the BEELZEBUB CLUB at this great little bar, Lili's21, since 1995. It started with us doing a few guest bartender stints on Sunday nights, and after a few of those went so well, we tried having bands and it's worked out really great. We have A LOT of great bands come through: TEXAS TERRI & THE STIFF ONES, TEENAGE FRAMES, CHEETAH CHROME, KEVIN K., THE WEAKLINGS, THE CHICKENHAWKS, THE SHORT FUSES, SPENT IDOLS, SINISTERS, etc. Some nights are really jam-packed crowded, others slow, but we always have a great time. We bartend and spin great rock'n'roll tunes and show rock'n'roll and porn videos...TEXAS TERRI really tore it up there, as did the night CHICKENHAWKS, KEVIN K., and the WEAKLINGS all played on one bill! We have theme nights and lots of no-cover/hangout nights. We still do it, but not as much lately cuz we've been so busy. Any band that thinks they may fit in should get in touch, and we'll see what we can do. The bar, Lili's21, is like our home base in Detroit, and they're really supportive about letting us do what we want. We have a website dedicated to the BEELZEBUB CLUB and the bands who have played there at: <http://community.webtv.net/trashbrats/BEELZEBUBCLUB>



## BAR STAR

**RICKY:** Here's a funny one...We played with D-Generation this one time here in Detroit, a couple years back. Well, not too many people were into their show, but we were diggin' in and getting pretty drunk and into it by show's end. A few of us even ended up singing back-ups on "D-Genenerated", their last song. Everything was cool, but their roadie guy was being kind of aggressive and overprotective of the band, the stage, etc. - we weren't fucking anything up or interfering with the show in any way, but when the show ended, we were hangin' in front of the stage talking to some of our friends when this dicky roadie guy just comes barreling through, leading the band to their room, like they were KISS or the Stones or something, and he whacked me HARD with his big flashlight. There was no reason for that, so I said, "What the fuck!" I started yelling at him, and he said some stuff back, and a few of our "Detroit Boys" saw this and were askin' me, "Ricky, is that guy fuckin with you? Do ya want us to kill 'im?", but I was kinda like, fuck it, but still, who did this guy think he was, and in our town no less, blah, blah, blah - you know - stupid, drunk, tough-guy thinking. He ended up coming out and apologizing, explaining that he was having a stressful tour, and he gave me some beers and all was cool...Then, a few months later we were in NYC. I'm walkin' with a friend, and I see the roadie-guy on St. Mark's Place, and my friend says to me, "There goes Michael Sticca." And then it hit me! "THAT'S MICHAEL STICCA?" Like, the guy who stabbed a guy in the JOHNNY BLITZ knife-fight?! Great! That guy could have probably KILLED me back in Detroit if he'd wanted to. And to think I was acting tough. That's pretty funny, eh?

## CLOWN ACT

**RICKY:** The true "Clown" element of rock'n'roll seems to be sadly missing more and more, as the Mimes have taken over. I mean, I love old DAVID BOWIE but there is no denying the fact that that guy was a total mime-art-fag. He would have been that much greater in my eyes if he could have joked more and not taken himself so damn seriously. Rock'n'roll needs more HANDSOME DICK MANITOBAS and IGGY POPS and BON SCOTTS to help keep the true clown element inherent in rock'n'roll alive and laughing. People got made fun of if they liked to ROCK or had fun listening to VAN HALEN, AC/DC,

whoever - now all of a sudden, all this stuff's supposedly "coming back", so you have all these jackasses trying to jump back on the bandwagon. This great shit never even went away! It was always there, only it was all too often denied or slaughtered on this altar of "indie-cred".

## FINANCIALLY EMBARRASSED

**RICKY:** We have not had that many albums released in our 13-year existence, and that is mostly due to a lack of any sort of label support. We just have not had the MONEY to record nearly as much as we would have liked. Besides our three CD's, there are actually two other full-length albums - one that's still yet to see the light of day. The first was the aforementioned, notorious "Pink Tape," which was our original calling-card recorded at home in 1987, and also the long-lost tracks we never got to finish when that guy with the studio backed down and we ran out of cash...Our problems keeping a stable drummer have always slowed us down, too, until CRAIG CASHEW joined in the fall of '93 during our first tour out in California.

By the end of '89 and on into '90 we had a label interested, so we recorded what is generally considered to be our first album, but we were never happy with the way most of the album came out. Now, FINALLY, it's been remixed, remastered, and re-released on CD! All of our releases have been recorded at various studios here in the Detroit area, but we still haven't found the big sound we're looking for, really. One of our seven-inches and two albums were recorded at White Room studios, and we felt like we were getting a good sound, but we ended up mixing them both at another studio with MIKE E.CLARK, of INSANE CLOWN POSSE fame, and again, they didn't end up like we had hoped. I know I would love to remix some of our LP, "THE JOKE'S ON YOU", and maybe even re-record a few of the songs that we flinch when we hear...We constantly hear from people that our records don't sound as good as we do live, and we're still trying to do the best we can on our limited budget. Our current album is being recorded at WOODSHED STUDIOS with TIM PAK, who was a member of this killer Detroit punk band from the 80s - ANGRY RED PLANET. We played some shows with them when we first got started, and we feel like he has a good idea of where we're coming from, and we've recorded various stuff with him there during the last year or so, including songs for various compilations and seven

inches, but we're financially unable to record the whole thing in one shot, so we have to chip away at it a little bit at a time. Label-wise, we've received zero support, except from LARRY GERMACK at CIRCUMSTANTIAL RECORDS and JIM RINN with his I-94 RECORDINGS label. These guys really seem to believe in what we do, and our songs and the spirit we're trying to get across. Other than that, it's all been a lot of one-offs, with us struggling to release stuff ourselves. We have been turned down by just about every major and indie label. In 1992-93 we were very close to signing with Restless, but it never panned out. None of us have much money, and we all have shit jobs to help pay the bills. It would be nice to be able to make a living playing music one day. Having a good circle of real friends is always a huge help and an inspiration to keep going, as well as being necessary for our mental health.

## WIDER THE VIEW

**BRIAN:** I think it's funny when people suddenly become very pious and wax eloquent about something they basically got involved in as a means to get laid. On the other hand, if you can't be really passionate about something, you might as well be dead. Yeah, rock'n'roll is in a pretty sorry state, but it's still there if you dig for it. I've heard all the "Rock's Coming Back" hype, but it never really went away - you did, motherfuckers! The fact that it's a small community makes it more fun anyway. Once it starts to appeal to a broader audience, the music and attitudes become diluted. It's happened to country, blues, rock, funk, reggae, punk, and rap. People start smelling money, fame, self-glorification, and career advancement. The ESSENCE of what originally made the music pure and real and unique becomes poisoned by ulterior motives. As a group, musicians are some of the biggest whores on the planet. You can cop the style, but you can't cop the FEEL. Hell, wedding bands have more integrity than most of the bands on MTV - at least they're making people DANCE. Bands forget that that's the purpose of music. It's not about "Hey, look at me! Look at me!", it's about US. It's about exchanging energy - taking and giving back. Rejuvenation and Rebirth. A celebration of being alive. The band and audience become one breathing organism in a baptism of sweat and smiles. Music seems to be getting separated further and further from the dance, and music created specifically for dance is



being made by computers and click-tracks. Whatever happened to the fluent, unspoken communication between two or more souls who trusted the rhythm beating on the inside?

## DOWNTOWN NOWHERE

**RICKY:** I guess there's this big "DETROIT PRIDE" that many of us here don't even notice until others point it out. On that note, it's really great to see some people from over here, who really deserve to do well, going out there and killing and really taking over. On tour lately, I've found myself time and time again actually defending KID ROCK and his band. A lot of people don't realize how long those guys have been kicking around the Detroit scene. We first played on a bill with KID ROCK in 1990! He's been into what he's doing for years: he, along with I.C.P., have been packing them in at up to 1,000 kids a show and selling records locally like crazy for years. It's just that now the rest of the country knows about them all. EMINEM, I don't know much about that guy at all, I never heard of him around here until he blew-up with that "My Name Is..." tune, but then again I'm not immersed in the Detroit hip-hop scene. I'm always glad to see someone make it big. Granted, a lot of the local bands who are now getting attention are Johnny-Come-Lately's signing big deals and jumping on the whole "wigger-rap-rock" bandwagon, but we also have bands like the DEMOLITION DOLL RODS out there making a splash in their respective genres. KID ROCK and I.C.P. worked their fuckin' asses off to get where they are - releasing their own stuff, booking their own shows, making their own scenes. MIKE E. CLARK, who we've worked on and off with for years, is I.C.P.'s main producer and really 3rd Clown Unknown. He engineered and mixed our album "Out of the Closet". And JIMMY BONES, KID ROCK'S keyboard player, even played piano on it. So yeah, you could say that a lot of the Detroit scene is like family, and everyone is pretty good about working together and helping each other out. KID ROCK had us open a show for him - there were 1,000 kids crammed into the State Theatre in downtown Detroit, and almost all of them HATED OUR GUTS! We got a KILLER video out of it, though, and believe me it makes those old films of the SEX PISTOLS, when they were getting all that abuse and saliva heaped on them, seem very tame in comparison. It was a really fun show, despite all the spit and thrown objects,

and I got enough change off the stage afterwards to go buy myself a post-gig beer or two.

## NOSTALGIA KILLS

**RICKY:** Ya don't see the real old school Detroit vets much at all. Even people from ten years ago don't get out much. When people get out of the music scene, they seem to really vanish - ya don't just see Ron Asheton or Bob Seger or whoever just hangin' out like some people from other places might think. I feel that the Detroit rock tradition, the Detroit spirit, is more of an attitude than about recycling the same well-worn riffs over and over. A lot of people seem to think they have the "DETROIT SOUND" cuz they sound like some of the old greats from here, but that ain't it at all. For one thing, how can you think you can just cop a sound or adequately convey an attitude, from an area that you're not intimately familiar with? Why even try?! All the Classic Detroit stuff - BOB SEGER, MC5, MOTOWN, PARLIAMENT, FUNKADELIC, IGGY & THE STOOGES, THE ROMANTICS, THE ROCKETS, THE MUTANTS, etc., all have one thing in common that goes beyond style or riffs, and that thing is SOUL. "DETROIT STYLE" is about more than trying to re-write "Funhouse" again and again. I tend to be more interested when people are expressing their own thing. Be yourself. It's cool to try to carry on some sorta "DETROIT ROCK'N'ROLL TRADITION." But c'mon, if you're from Sweden or L.A. or N.Y. - tell us how it is and how you feel about where you're from. Worry about communicating your own message, not imitating somebody else's "style".

## JUST MAYBE

**BRIAN:** I love ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN'S "ANTI-ROCK CONSPIRACY" theory, but I think it's more of a "Pro-Money" thing than an "Anti-Rock" thing. I don't believe anyone's going out of their way to "Keep Rock Down", if anything is holding rock back, it's the nature of rock itself. The spirit of rock'n'roll is rebellion - rebelling against complacency, the ignorance of the status quo, and the cowardice of the herd mentality. This is what fuels rock, at least in my mind. When the spirit becomes marketable, then maybe rock'n'roll ain't doing its job. This is not to say that anyone who breaks through must be complete shit, or that something is a work of genius due to its lack of popularity, cuz

that ain't always the case. It's the old Art vs. Commerce Debate. I'd like to make a living doing what I do, so I must consider what we do to be somewhat commercial, right? My big dream is to have the band pay for my health insurance someday.

**RICKY:** ...To finally make a decent living from playing music is one of my big goals, y'know? It's still fun and although we've been playing together for 13 years now, we still get along and feel that the songs and playing and everything keep getting better and better. So why stop, only to try to start over in a new band? We hope to keep touring and touring, doing bigger and better shows, selling more records, and moving forward, but we will be playing and making records no matter how big or unknown we are. It's what we truly love to do.

## MUST BE THE COCAINE

**RICKY:** A lot of it is not as glamorous as people make it out to be...those nights on the road without getting paid, putting up with the asshole elements of crowds, and having to fight just to get through a show, having gear ripped off in NYC out of the locked trunk of a rental car that was just left alone for a few minutes, having an awful band like TOOL open for us here in Detroit and then seeing them becoming huge, and just the business in general. It sucks to have to struggle to get albums out and to have to tour on such a desperate, shoestring budget, while all these other groups have big recording budgets and label support and don't even appreciate it. To me the whole "live fast/die young" stuff maybe appealed to me when I was younger, but now it's all just about survival. People like WAYNE KRAMER and CHEETAH CHROME are very inspirational in terms of how to get your shit together and keep it going after all the years of shit, abuse, and solid big name recognition. I mean, it's not like any of us in the band are sober or preach one thing or another, but there is a big difference between having a few drinks and getting stoned; than getting so fucked-up that you are just an asshole to those around you. When you wreck shows and burn bridges, it's not a positive thing. I think a lot of younger kids look at the "ROCK-N'ROLL, GET FUCKED-UP LIFESTYLE" and think that it's the only way to do it, when in reality it always fucks things up more than it helps.



## MOTHERFUCKIN' BLUES

**RICKY:** It's been a drag having no real booking agent that would come up with a little label deal. We've always done everything ourselves, and it really burns ya out. I'd rather just write songs and play shows than have to worry about all the business stuff, but on the plus side we own all of our songs, don't really have a lot of debt, and have been in full creative control the whole time. It would be really amazing to get to record an album without having to constantly cut corners and keep our eyes on the clock the whole time.

## LATENIGHT THRILLER

**RICKY:** We just did a tour with JEFF DAHL and his band last September. It was terrific to play with an outstanding band like them night after night. Most of the turn-outs were pretty awesome and everybody had fun at all the shows. It gave us all a lot of hope that when people know there's a special rock'n'roll band coming to town, they'll still come out to support it if they know it's happening. JEFF is a real easy-goin' guy to tour with, but when he gets on stage he kicks ass night after night after night! He talked about releasing his *Tour Diary* of the whole escapade, but decided it might be better to leave some things left unsaid. I kept one, too, and CRAIG has his posted on our website. There was lots of crazy fun shit, but nobody got hurt! We love touring, although it can be VERY rough, as anyone who's in more of an underground band can tell you. Especially when you're without any tour support, shows get cancelled, and vans break down. But to me it's always worth it, even when you're in some crazy little town and only three people show up, as long as they really, really dig it. There's this place in Wichita, Kansas called KIRBY'S BEER STORE that is literally the size of someone's living room - you get 20-30 people in there and it seems packed. It even makes LINDA'S DOLL HUT, another great place to play, seem big! Sometimes it's those little places that turn out to be the best and have the coolest vibe. We have consistently toured since our inception, and have especially been all over the Midwest, always without a booking agent. We get road fever when we've been stuck at home for long periods. AUSTIN, TX is ALWAYS a fun place to play and a wild time. The people there really know how to get it on and make out-of-town bands feel right at home. Last time I ended up at some Redneck Karaoke

Bar where me and GERRY BULEMIC ended up onstage doing a very drunk, kinda off, but sincere version of "Sweet Home Alabama" with the locals. We had a blast!

## CUB SCOUT DROPOUT

**RICKY:** Our old pal CRANFORD NIX, formerly of Detroit but now belonging to the rest of the world, is doing exceptionally well with his new band THE MALAKAS, who are based in San Diego. I think CRANFORD may be one of the best, if not THE best, songwriters of our generation. I-94 RECORDINGS released the MALAKAS CD and also released a seven-inch and the first album re-release for us. Like I said, Jim Rinn has been really cool and supportive, and he's in this for all the right reasons - he has a real passion and love for the music and I think it's further illustrated not only by his commitment to folks like us and Cranford, but also in the details of his releases, such as his attention to the well-penned press release and the artwork. We have discussed doing another album with him next year, an ALL-DETROIT covers record!

## WOMEN SHOULD BE WILDER

**RICKY:** The collaboration with TEXAS TERRI was just a spur of the moment kinda thing - me and TONI ROMEO were out in L.A. last year playing some shows with KEVIN K., and TEXAS TERRI, who we're great friends with, asked us to sing and play on their track "Women Should Be Wilder" for the essential I-94 Recordings compilation, "Drunk On Rock, Volume Two", so me and TONI sang backups and me and KEVIN K. split the lead solo in the middle of the song. Speaking of TEXAS TERRI & THE STIFF ONES, I'd just like to mention that they're one of our very favorite bands, and her guitarist DEMON BOY is one of the more underrated guitar players in rock'n'roll - he's got a very cool style! I also really dig the TEENAGE FRAMES, SLOPPY SECONDS, KEVIN K., BEAT ANGELS, JEFF DAHL, and everyone doing what they really believe in, not just following trends. It doesn't seem like there's very many bands right now with high-quality songs. A lot of groups have the right idea and the right profile, but no SONGS!

## NO JANGLE THRUST

**BRIAN:** You asked about the songwriting process...sometimes the words come first, sometimes it's the music. It's usually best when they come together. I'd had some luck matching old music up with new lyrics, and old lyrics up with new music. It's usually easier to match lyrics with the music, because if I've got some music I've probably got some sorta melody already, and that means there's a certain mood and a fixed amount of syllables that solidify in my head, and it's hard to try to make lyrics fit into something that has become unbendable. When I come up with music, sometimes I hear a melody in my head and put chords to it, but sometimes I strum random chords and fart around with melodies until I stumble on something good. Sometimes it's a guitar lick that you can base most of the song on. As far as lyrics go, sometimes it's a clever line that writes the song, and sometimes it's a situation or mood or different aspects of relationships. When I say relationships, I don't necessarily mean the kind you have with lovers, although there are plenty of great and horrible songs still to be written on that subject. I mean things that may affect how you relate to friends, your folks, your future, whatever. I think some of my best ideas have come from me trying to resolve situations rolling around in my empty skull. When the band comes up with something, either RICK or I will bring in some music, and all four of us will then beat it into shape, adding accents and making adjustments - if the other three don't VETO it first.

## I'M JUST A GAS BOY

**RICKY:** We try not to be an overwhelmingly political band, or to preach onstage or in our songs, but we never wanted to have a lot of "Baby Baby, Let's Make Love" songs either. My favorite groups are the ones who rock, but who also have great lyrics, great tunes, and can really deliver live! It's strange to me that we invariably get lumped together with all the 80's glam/metallers just cause I rat my hair - because we have never tried to really emphasize our appearance as the most crucial element, like some of the younger bands that nowadays obsess about their shoes. Obviously, we like having a flamboyant, visual appeal, but it's troubling when that's all people can see in us. It's an effective way to attract people's attention, but for us the song is the thing we want you to pay attention to. The best rock'n'roll has ALWAYS had style to burn. ELVIS, THE STONES, BEATLES, KISS,



SEX PISTOLS, NEW YORK DOLLS, HANOI ROCKS, DOGS D'AMOUR, etc. All of us have loved to dress up since we were teenagers, and I doubt you'll see us wearing goatees or wigger clothes or gas station attendant uniforms anytime soon. We look like rock'n'roll stars and we put on a big show and give everybody a good time, and something colorful to look at as well as listen to!

## MAKIN' IT RIGHT

**RICKY:** BOOTSEY X & THE LOVE-MAS-TERS are a Detroit band that have been around in various forms for years. I've been playing with them since around 1993. The singer BOOTSEY was in the classic Detroit punk band THE RAM-RODS back in 1977-78, and Gerald, the other guitarist, was in COLDCOCK around that same time. It was really an honor for me to be asked to join, and I have played on all their releases since - a seven-inch, some compilation tracks, a CD EP on TOTAL ENERGY, and their self-released full-length album. The sound is kind of like a guitar-driven R & B Detroit punk rock'n'roll thing, like the STOOGES, JAMES BROWN-type soul, garage, and rhythm and blues all mixed up together. I haven't written any tunes with 'em, so I am more like a side-man in the band. I've also played alongside KEVIN K. since 1998. We met him back in 1995, when his old band THE ROAD VULTURES came to an end and he went solo. He needed some guys to play with him on a tour of JAPAN in December of '98, so me and TONI ROMEO joined ranks. We had a stellar time, and we've continued to play shows with him in Detroit, L.A., Germany, and Italy this year. I recorded five new songs with him last year in N.Y.C. for an album that hasn't come out yet. We're pretty much open to continuing to support KEVIN K. in the future when he needs us, as long as it doesn't interfere with any TRASH BRATS stuff. We get along splendidly and dig the same music, so it's been really fun so far.

BRIAN recorded his debut solo album, "Falls from Grace", during 1996 and 1997, which created a lot of tension in the band, not to mention that we were all living together at the time. He self-released it. He's recorded another album that, again, has none of us other 'BRATS on it, and it's also pretty different in style from what we're best known for. It's good for his creative juices to pursue these other musical forays, and it gives him a chance to showcase his ideas and songs outside the realm of loud guitar-based rock'n'roll.

## IMITATION GENERATION:

**RICKY:** It's all I do really, and I honestly, REALLY believe in it! I could never just hop trends or play styles I didn't enjoy, I'll always love playin' a good, catchy rock'n'roll tune, the kinda tunes that still make me smile and get me excited after all these years, and I do believe in carrying the torch, carrying on the tradition of True, REAL, Heartfelt ROCK'N'ROLL. Song by song, like Hollywood Bob Starker said, band by band, person by person, it will carry on. Lately I've been listening to WILCO, the MOTT THE HOOPLE box set, ELVIS PRESLEY, old KISS, FORTY EIGHTS, and MERLE HAGGARD. I don't consider rap-wigger-rock-industrial-metal to be real rock'n'roll at all. In the underground, some bands like the HELLA-COPTERS are pretty cool, but now you have tons of bands trying to be just like them. It's a total joke, and the whole sleazy-hotrods-flame tattoos-psychobilly-hipster schtick is also tired and way overdone. Again, it's funny to observe how these trends come and go. Supposedly, it's "HIP" all of a sudden to be glammy or have a rock'n'roll image or whatever. SO MANY bands all cut their hair and changed their clothes to conform to each short-lived "movement" in the last 15 years, and now they all wanna be rock'n'roll again. And when this fashion changes, they'll be falling all over themselves chasing the next haircut, taking out their piercings, and trying for a piece of that action. Since when is it cool to be white trash? I'd never brag about something like that. I guess a lot of this stuff signifies a backlash against the "politically correct" obsessions of the 90s. In any case, now it's apparently considered "cool" to be a redneck-macho-metal-jock-cowboy hat-wearing meathead!

## HUNGRY EYEBALLS

**RICKY:** *Flipside* is still pretty cool, although it seems very cliquey and also very hard to find these days. I can never seem to find a new issue until months after it's out. There doesn't seem to be very much rock'n'roll writing going on these days, though. Everyone is so preoccupied with networking and status-seeking, and so afraid to risk ever burning bridges, that no one speaks out with the kind of passion and fury that the greats like LESTER BANGS, JOHN KORDOSH, and ROBERT DUNCAN used to. *Vicious Kitten* from AUSTRALIA is a pretty good read, although now they've become more of a label/newsletter, as opposed to a huge

zine. *Carbon 14* is also cool.

## IF YOU GET IT

**RICKY:** We just released "American Disaster", our long-overdue new album for STORM RECORDS, a local Detroit label who've been pretty supportive so far. Hopefully, it will be our best yet. I wanna put back into rock'n'roll what I've gotten out of it all these years. To me, that's the greatest compliment you can receive - when someone really appreciates or identifies with a certain song or really connects to your music. Or, better still, when they're inspired to play or start their own group because of you. That's what it's really all about. When they say, "I love that band...but hey, I CAN DO THIS TOO!" Carrying the torch on and on because, after all, it's none of ours to keep in perpetuity. So go ahead and take it, give it your own twist, personalize it, leave your mark, and spin it back out there for the next chosen ones to carry it along. Yeah, if ya get it, good for you - find someone else to give it to! I agree somewhat with what Mister Ratboy said about the kids needing their own music and not their parents' music, but no matter how the form changes and merges and mixes, somewhere and somehow the real rock'n'roll spirit will be sustained. Sometimes it may lie dormant, but it's just waiting for the right rituals, performers, and participants to work up that ol' voodoo once again, and the shit will be flying and all hell will be breaking loose to the old/new beat. I wanna know if you can feel it, cuz I still can, and a big AMEN to that.

## SOMEDAY'S TOO LATE

**BRIAN:** Who will save the soul of rock'n'roll? I guess we each gotta play our part, even though everyone has their own definition of what it is. It's like, "I Believe in the One True God - the one that looks and thinks the same way I do." The Rockabillies are saving what their definition of it is, the STOOGES/MC5 disciples are saving what their definition is, and THE TRASH BRATS are trying to save theirs. All we can do is fine-tune and improve our own definition, and it's up to everyone else whether they want to accept it or not. I'm just happy to be able to participate in something I truly believe in. We may be destined for poverty and obscurity, but at least we can say we did it our way.

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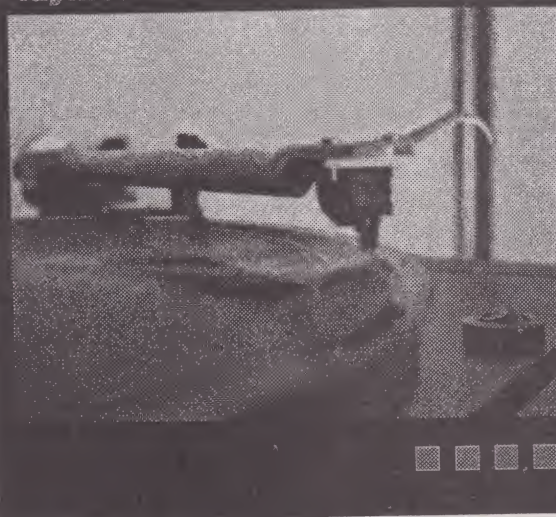
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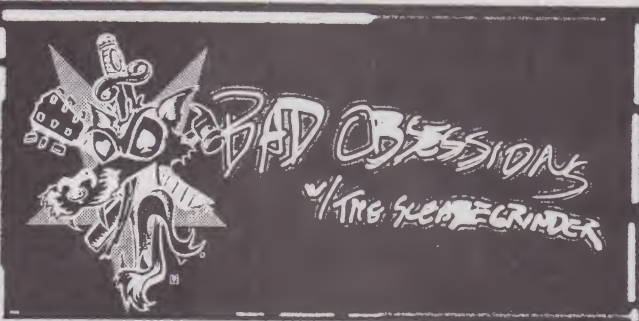
# HIT SQUAD

## IT'S SO EASY

10.31.01, 10:30PM

"Those flying monkeys are starting to freak me out."

I had batted around the idea of opening this issue's column with some maudlin diatribe on "love in the time of Anthrax," but if I keep up this streak of open-hearted honesty I'm going to blow my image, so I'll get to the Rock as soon as possible. Suffice to say, it was awfully Goddamn surreal to actually be saying, "I hope there's no terrorist attacks this weekend to fuck



up our wedding," but Hell, I'm an American, I'm adaptable. Luckily, nothing blew up. I wore leather pants, and we all lived happily ever after. Thanks to the Super Rockers that played the Sleazegrinder Rock and Roll Wedding party — **The Humanoids**, **David James Motorcycle**, **Lamont**, **Milligram**, **Rock City Crimewave**, and **Cracktorch**. It was the best fuckin' rock show I've ever been to. And I didn't even have to pay to get in. But back to our story. What flying monkeys? It's Halloween, and the Linwood is littered with faux-Hessians and blood-splattered Kurts and Courtneys. Tonight was originally supposed to feature the world's greatest all-female black metal band, **Tormentula**, but they couldn't make it. Too many church burnings to attend to back in Wisconsin, I guess. In one of those classic rock and roll "Hail Mary" moves, local post-indie, gasket-blowing noise tyrants **Black Helicopter** signed on to save the night. They had something big planned, they assured me. Word on the street was that they had a night of Nordic Black Metal planned, nail armbands, corpsepaint, and blood. That's not what happened at all. The Linwood's stage was covered in a giant blue screen. The "Wizard of Oz" was being projected on it. **Black Helicopter**, who are surly, burly cats dressed in trucker chic most days, had transformed themselves into the film's main characters — Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Man — with an almost **Gwar**-like attention to detail. And they were playing **Pink Floyd**. It was madness. I don't do enough drugs, so I didn't know there was a whole cult of stoners that listen to Floyd and watch Wizard and find some cosmic synchronicity, but there you go. So the wife and I are gawking from afar. The place is packed, which is good news, because people seemed to be under the impression that I had something to do with tonight's show, and I feared some kind of Wednesday night, nothin' but crickets disaster. But we can't see what's happening at the front of the stage, we can't see the flying monkeys. "They were peeking in the windows, earlier." Bob Maloney, **Quitter**

rock star is yelling in my ear. "I didn't know what the Hell was going on. It was spooky, man. There's like 15 of them up there." After the band segue into some of their own convenience store suicide anthems and finish their set, the crowd starts heading for the bar, and I see them. Flying fucking monkeys, a whole gang of them. Heavy. "You know what the weird thing is?" **Black Helicopter**'s main man Zach is still in his costume. My guess is that his blonde pony tailed wig, nicely offsetting his black stubble, is the weird thing, but that's only *one* of them. "The weird thing is that those monkeys aren't ours. I mean, we know who they are, but we didn't plan this. They just showed up." I ask him how this whole theme developed. "Well, we were going to do the black metal thing, but people have seen that, it's been done before. What they haven't seen is a big fat guy dressed up like Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz playing 'Dark Side of the Moon'. Maybe next year we'll have Munchkins." It could have been weirder. A few months go, Zach had come up to me at a show and said, "You think if a band played the Redneck Fest dressed up like the Ku Klux Klan — you think people would get the joke?" I just stared at him. "Not that we were planning it, or anything. I'm just wondering." I love those brain-damaged motherfuckers.

11:15 PM

Illustrious *Hit List* editor and the original rock and roll burnout **Jeff Bale** is in town tonight. He's on some East Coast mission. Rock shows, record collecting, checking in with his far-flung columnists. Jeff's easy to find, his gray curls of Michael J Pollard hair billowing off of his head like smoke, his tattered leather jacket, which has sweated through everything from the **Stooges** to the **Donnas**, hanging off of his shoulders like a crack-addicted girlfriend. He's drinking the Nyquil of rock bar drinks, Jägermeister, and he's leaning against the wall next to the women's bathroom, leering at the local talent. A total pro. "Are all the girls in Boston fat?" He asks me. "Well, my wife's not", I tell him. "No, she's a pretty one. Good job." he says. Jeff talks about the West Coast, the publishing racket, what a joke *Punk Planet* is — you know, life, the universe, and everything. And then he imparts a little bad wisdom on me. "The **MC5**", he says with all authority, "weren't really *that* good." Son of a bitch. Somebody call Sweden, there's been a change of plans.

12:00 AM

"Can somebody find me some duct tape, so I can put my pants back together?" Such are the perils of the rock and roll werewolf. **The Humanoids** have finally made it to the stage to close out Halloween with a blast of living dead motor sleaze, but it hasn't been easy for Clay Nferno. His glam-wolf make-up is coming off in clumps, and now his leather pants have split down the middle. The band launches into "Big Rig", their ode to rock and roll truckers. Sparks shoot out of Johnny Machine's guitar like some post-mortem **Ace Frehley**. Joey Sinn wants to bombard the crowd with candy, but he can't find it in the green haze of the smoke machine. "Candy?" Clay asks, incredulous. "My fucking face is falling off, I don't give a shit about candy!" You know, they tell me there's a war going on, that we're a nation on high alert. But at least as far as tonight's concerned, the kids are all right.



## THE PERILS OF ROCK AND ROLL DECADENCE

## SLEAZEGRINDER

"It happened this winter, somewhere in February or March, I'm not sure anymore. It was really cold that night, snow was falling, and it was freezing. We had to do a gig in Beverlo, about a 45-minute drive from home. We knew some guys over there and one of them, Marcel, was going to pick us up with the van of another friend, Poef. At 7 pm he picked us up at our rockin' place. But first he had to fill the tank with some boostin' fluid. No problem, about 3 miles down the road was a gas station. But not being his own van, Marcel asked Bloodshed what he had to fill it with: gasoline or petrol? Well, considering it was a very old orange van, we decided to go for gasoline. About 1.5 miles further we asked God, 'Why...why, oh why?!' Yes indeed, the motor was running on petrol and we poured gasoline in it. So we stood there next to the road, about 3 miles from home, in the blistering cold, in the snow...freezing our butts and things off and waiting till the tank had lost all the gasoline...with the speed of drop by drop. We phoned the guy from the gig and he said people were waiting...some even had brought a camera to film the gig. Bloodshed walked back 3 miles through a snowstorm to the gas-station to buy petrol (after he first bought a gas can, because we didn't even have that.) After the tank was finally empty, Marcel tried to start the van...but the battery was down. So...we had to perform at 8pm...at about 1:30 am I phoned the guy at the gig that we weren't coming...we never got further than 3 miles from home. Yes...Spinal Tap lives!"

- Bloodshed Bob, **Bronco Billy** (<http://surf.to/bronco-billy>)

"I want to swim through honey, I want to dance with the dead. Instead I will tell you of my only glimpse at luxury through the indie eyes of the Dirtmitts (Vancouver, B.C) I wish I could you tell of bare cocaine asses and ecstasy love-in's (what if my mom reads this?) or brushes with stardom (had a few, they never recognized me), but instead I will tell you of our 2-day tour, yeah a 2-day tour. We had a big agent represent us for the weekend for a 2-day Kokanee beer event in the beautiful Rocky mountains of Alberta. First stop was an eight-hour drive to Jasper, Alberta. We overestimated our travel time and arrived early for check-in at the 4 star hotel, the Athabasca. Not only did we get put up in a mackin' crib, but were told to keep quiet that we were being paid \$500 more than the headlining well-known Canadian band. We had fun, drank their booze, and Jen necked with the hot drummer. Next day, off through the cascading peaks of the snow-capped Rockies to Banff, another resort town further south. Astounded, we laughed hysterically in disbelief when the agent told us to check into the Banff Springs Resort Hotel. Snuggled in the mountains, we swam in the outdoor/indoor water-falled salt-water pools, running like kids down the castle hallways lined with medieval torches leading to hidden rooms with guarded knight's armor. After playing the large cash, small gig we gladly retired to our 5 star hotel, sneaking down to the grand piano parlor room and rested at 4 am on the wood floors in the pastoral fresca ceiling ballroom. Kokanee in one hand, joint in the other, we were the queens and kings of the world. Oh, the Rockies beer companies, how you rocked our world, well, at least our weekend. Yeah, corporate sponsors suck...right?"

- Natasha, **Dirtmitts** ([www.dirtmitts.com](http://www.dirtmitts.com))

"A few years ago we drove several states away from our home in Texas to play at a private art college. I don't know how we got on the show other than that it was set up through a band we drove up there with, the now defunct Reverbarockets (who were really good). So, apparently this private art school full of pseudo-intellectuals have a once a year party/fashion show. Somehow, we got on the bill. We were to go on right before the fashion show. As we loaded our equipment on stage (a good-sized school auditorium), wanna-be model types got dressed up by wanna-be designer types and gave us looks of disdain. The stage was about 4 feet high and the art kids had constructed a big runway for the models to walk down (sort of like an ugly Victoria's Secret commercial). After we tested our equipment a 'stage-manager' who was a couple of steps away from 'Hollywood' in those 'Mannequin' movies, approached us and told us that under no circumstances were we to set foot on the precious runway. That's like giving someone a new porn tape and telling them that "under no circumstances are they allowed to jerk-off to it". Yeah, I'll just look at the tape for the acting...Anyway, we played and tore the black velvet covering the runway to shreds. 'Hollywood' started hyperventilating and shrieking in that Hollywood way (I know you've all seen the damn movie). The crowd of about 250 art kids stared at us like we were from another planet and remained silent when we berated them. After we played and the models went on, everyone went out to the outside campus area for some type of art student circle jerk. We were informed by 'Hollywood' that we had almost ruined the evening and we wouldn't be getting paid, and that we were a blight on humanity. After I talked my band mates out of murdering 'Hollywood', a terror was unleashed upon the students final projects...sculptures were broken, tables were smashed, and clothing was doused in beer. Many paintings of minimalist abstract paintings were made all the more meaningful by now reading 'I love the Riverboat Gamblers.' Etchings of wildlife now had 'Texas' scrawled across them. One of the Reverbarockets shit in a teacher's desk. It was beautiful. It more than made up for not getting paid. We may have destroyed the next Picasso's early work, but I think it's more likely we destroyed the next graphic artist for Vagisil's early work. They say that to this day the kids at that school still talk about "those assholes from Texas".

- Teko, **Riverboat Gamblers** ([www.beatville.com](http://www.beatville.com))

"We played Sir Morgan's Cove, which is now the Lucky Dog in Worcester, with a bunch of hair metal bands. It went over very badly." Random Road Mother are one of the most truly beloved bands in Boston. The suburbs are a different story entirely. "Most of our worst shows, were in Worcester. I got beat up there once. That was at the hair metal show." Dave laughs. "My band had pretty much





# HIT SQUAD

ditched me, they went to find a strip club or something. The bartender loved us, so he had just been giving me free drinks all night. So finally I stumbled out of the place looking for the band. I found my guitar player, and I was yelling. Worcester sucks!', and it just so happened that the LLCool J concert just got out at the Centrum. I guess some guy wanted to display some civic pride, so he decided to kick my ass for saying that his city sucked. I don't blame him. So he got in a couple of punches, and I fell in the street, and as soon as I fell, our van pulled up and I jumped in. That was probably the worst gig."

- Dave, **Random Road Mother** ([www.roadmother.com](http://www.roadmother.com))



"So, as usual, we got to the club way too early to load in. I was kind of surprised to see some people already there and ready to Rock. Okay, well, there *was* a 30-something creepy guy staring at me over his beer and his mother, knitting an afghan, on the stool next to him. They stayed all night and didn't draw too much attention to themselves, so I kind of just smiled to myself about the whole thing and shrugged it off. The next day the

band got together to watch the videotape of the show. We noticed that when in fast forward, my creepy friend remained completely stationary in the middle of the screen while the world goes on around him...3 hours...as the afghan grew and grew, "Bobby" never moved. I eventually got a phone call from my new fan. Over the sound of really big dogs barking, I recognized my voice in the background. He was talking about how great my CD was and how he wanted guitar lessons. Anyhow, we ended up playing our next show at the same club and Bobby was there early like before, his mother with her many bundles of yarn. He gave me some pink slippers that she made for me. They fit like a glove. Time passed and I got a few more calls, but I never saw the odd couple again...Well, I got a letter in the mail about a week ago. The return address was that of our local mental health complex. It explained how my little friend had been kidnapped and tortured by the police. They shot his dog. He was locked up. He wanted me to come visit, and he wrote me a song. "The sea gulls chased the dove away during the sunrise we made love all night," was one of the lines that struck me. It was disturbing in a cute sorta way — *sorta*. So last Friday night I stopped by County Psyche and left him a band T-shirt and letter to refresh his strange attraction to me, because everybody knows you need a creepy, stalker-guy fan in order to be any kind of legitimate Rockstar chick. Right?"

- Binky Tunny (<http://www.geocities.com/binkytunny/>)

"To be kicked from a support tour with a big band is no fun and The Scarecrows absolutely got bad luck and experience of that shit. We played a show in a pretty big Swedish town in '99 when the headlining band had just released their hit-single. We had 10-15 cool Swedish gigs to look forward to, and after that a trip round Europe. But what can I say, we didn't behave. Both bands had played a successful gig and the party at the hotel afterward got a little wild. I remember it started with both bands peeing in a big juice pitcher because we wanted to play a joke,



so me and the guitarist from the other band made a break-in on the cocktail cabinet and stole lots of vodka and whiskey-bottles and hid it in their drum cases. We thought we were smart and that the hotel personnel would never notice anything was gone. The morning after our room was strangely filled with water (PeeGee might have had some fun in the shower or something), and all the booze was in the other bands cases. But they had left and we were still there to take the blame. Some days after we got a call from their manager, kicking us off the tour and telling us we were too bad to have around, and the hotel sent us a pretty heavy invoice. Shit happens, but it was a hell-lotta fun!"

- Manx, **Scarecrows** (<http://www.torget.se/users/t/thecrows/>)

"We were playing in a club in a club on Melrose in August. There were these three Mexican chicks we were talking to that had some drugs. So, of course, *we are gonna do the drugs*. So we all get in the van and we are all doing drugs, and we turn around and one of the Mexican girls is totally going down on Pickle. I mean sucking his dick. The rest of us went in the club to tune up and that's when the drive-by happened. They were shooting back and forth at each other on the corner of the club. Two people got hit. A bullet went through our van's passenger side windshield, through the dash where the airbag is. Pickle got freaked out, but lived to tell about it nonetheless. Good thing we got the insurance on that rental van. We rocked, and after the show cops were everywhere looking for shells. They checked our van and told us to go. We went and hung out with our friends in LA, and when we woke up in the morning we saw the bullet hole. It was pretty fucked up shit."

- Abe Ruthless, **Slash City Daggers**  
([www.slashcitydaggers.com](http://www.slashcitydaggers.com))

"Once, years ago, there was this girl who hung out at practices all the time. I told her that if she kept showing up we were gonna just chain her in the practice place and leave her there all the time. She got all excited and said she *wanted* me to chain her up. It was really ridiculous, but she kept at it. I told her I was broke and that she would have to buy the chains. So we went to Home Depot, the big warehouse place, where our old guitar player Tom worked. We got there and I told Tom, 'I need some good chains to chain this girl up,' and he couldn't believe it. And she was like, 'Yeah! yeah!' and she picked out these hefty chains and a lock to go on it. So I was like, 'Yeah, you better buy those, those look sturdy,' and I'm all laughing and stuff. So she took 'em up to the counter and bought them. I was like 'Ok, if that's what you want to do, I'm your man!' Tom was just laughing like we were a couple of crazy people. We were probably all high and drunk or



just stupid because we were young and crazy. We went back to the practice place, I chained her up, and we had a crazy fourth of July that I'd better not talk about...then she disappeared and I never saw her again. Years later I heard she was telling people I was this evil guy who chained her up and shit like that. I wish I knew where she was today. We had a lot of fun."

— Gideon Smith, **the Dixie Damned** (www.smallstone.com)

## SLEAZEGRINDER



we go and get another bottle of wine. I end up eating more pills and playing Cracktorch for her. I wake up on Tuesday morning and walk home with my Cracktorch CD...I find myself alive and call my friend 'cause I'm lookin for something to do. I take the Cracktorch CD over her house and play it while we drink some beer. I end up driving back Downriver and hooking up with some valium. After taking

the pills, I listened to Cracktorch. At this point the entire week has become a blur and the only thing constant that I can remember is Cracktorch. Basically, Cracktorch is my new favorite band. I owe you big time for sending me that CD...I still haven't got the Little Beast out to you 'cause I've been trying to compile some shit that we've recorded to send you. I'll get it out. Dude, thanks for the CD...and tell them I really wanna hook up and play some shows....and drink some beer. Later man, J"

When he's not in a full bore pill frenzy, Johnny Flash is the main man in **The Lanternjack**, Detroit's sleaze punk, fuck metal titans. Their self-released 2000 album, "Hussy", was a flash fire of unrestrained charisma, cartoon violence, and slashing, dive bombing cock rock extravagance, the most convincing display of desperate glory whoring since "Appetite For Destruction". Genius in a plastic bottle, in other words. With a

## DON'T FUCK WITH JOHNNY: DEEP INSIDE THE LANTERNJACK

"Sleep less and drink more wine..." — Milligram

**Johnny Flash** cares about two things. He care about his kicks, and he cares about his ROCK. And don't ask him about "in what order." Johnny Flash doesn't do *order*. "Dude, Got the **Cracktorch**", he recently wrote me. "Started listening to it on Sunday before rehearsal. Had eaten a small arsenal of pills the night before...I started drinking a gallon of cheap wine while it played. The wine was gone before I knew it, but luckily my pill girl showed up. We drove to the bar afterwards while Cracktorch played in the car. I ended up in a shitty part of town, taking more pills and listening to Cracktorch. I passed out on a couch and woke up to a pit bull that wouldn't let me upstairs, and I'm yelling 'Someone come get this fucking dog!'...So the dog bites me and I barely make it out. I'm still cooked out so I just have these guys drop me off at the bar around 2 pm.. This girl shows up and



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# HIT SQUAD

sound that stretches from the razorblade proto-punk of the **Dead Boys** to the glossy hard rock swagger of the **Comatones** and **Gunfire Dance**, the Lanternjack take the legacy of rock into their veins with an easy indulgence and spit it out in wall-shaking, tits-out 2 minute anthems of gutter lust and outlaw pride. So why haven't you heard of them? Because they're broke, crazy, and from the wrong side of the tracks. But with a new album in the works and an ever-widening spiral of apocalyptic live shows, they are on the verge of becoming, if not a household name, then an instantly recognizable wanted poster at post offices everywhere. You want blood? You got it. Ladies and gentleman, the most dangerous band in the world, straight out of Motor City — the Lanternjack. Join the party, or run for cover.

I call Johnny at 2 PM one Saturday in October. "Dude, this is the earliest I've been up since 8th grade," he tells me. Being Johnny Flash, it seems, is a full time job. "Hopefully not," he sighs. "You know we get ten cents for every bottle out here?" Welcome to the Lanternjack twelve-step program. "I pass these guys on their ten speeds, and they're like 45-50, with long hair, and they've got a plastic bag full of 40 uncens that they're taking back to the liquor store. They're on their bikes because they lost their licenses thirty years ago. I don't want to be that fucking guy." Yet the rock must roll on, so Johnny has devised a plan for rock star longevity — short bursts of sobriety. "If you go a week and a half straight drinking, then you're not having a good time, you're just maintaining," he says. "I know when my synapses aren't firing right, and I know I'm not a dumb guy, so when I start talking or thinking like a dumb guy, I know it's time to eat some algae and drink some juice, to go out and get an oil change." Turns out, I've managed to catch Johnny during one of these rare dry times. "I like to take a break once in awhile. Like right now — I'm on the wagon. I'm doing Vicodan instead of drinking." Only in rock and roll would a class C narcotic haze pass for sobriety. "It's only for a week", he assures me. "For the liver, you know." Mr. Flash's voice is deep and low, his throat like some cactus-choked desert that the words barely escape from, but he talks like a winner, like a bulletproof poet with a jaundiced, battle-hardened sense of humor. Which is easy to do when you're the leader of a band that simply cannot be out-rocked. "I really don't think anybody can," he says with authority. "Arrogantly enough, I don't think it ever happened. I mean, we might have been out-rocked, playing wise, because we were too fucked up, but then our performance would have been above and beyond, because I probably fell down on my face or something."

## THE EROTIC ADVENTURES OF FRANKENSTEIN

"Everybody hates us," Johnny readily admits. "I have no idea why." Theories do abound, though. "A bunch of shit went down,

but this was a long time ago. And all these rumors circulated over time, like in high school, you know? Rumors that were basically about me knifing somebody." "So," I ask him, "did you knife anybody, Johnny?" He laughs. "No. No, I didn't." When pressed for further details, he paints the bloody picture. "We played this bar on the East side of Detroit. It's right on the edge of Grosse Point, which is this really wealthy neighborhood, but it's right next to the ghetto. It's really weird. I had a lot of wine. I drank a gallon of Carlo Rossi before the show. I was like Tony Clifton in

drag," he deadpans. "Anyway, apparently I got too close to some guy's girlfriend or some shit, and I didn't realize it until later, until I watched a videotape of the show, but these guys were throwing these big motherfucking thick beer glasses right at me, but the music was so loud, it was breaking off the walls. So that one dude, he came around to the corner of the stage, and he got in a good pitch right at my head. He got me, right in the eye. That busted my face open. But we kept going, you know." Of course. "They shut the bar down, shut the power down, called the cops, and all these ambulances showed up. Because apparently — see, I didn't know why the ambulances showed up." "Maybe," I offer, "It's because you were bleeding to death." "Right. But there was this other dude, I guess, who tried to stop the guy that threw the glass on his way out, you know, trying to play the hero. So the dude that broke the glass, he just grabbed a bottle, and broke it over this dude's head. So, he Frankensteined *him*, too. We got blamed for starting a riot, and after that no one wanted to book us." Ever the optimist, Johnny finds a spin even in this freakshow. "Yeah well, there's a good and bad to everything. Paying for that show was the best thousand dollars I ever spent, because everybody knew who we were in a week."

But before that, there was this, a simple conceit — what if we formed a band and we just rocked harder than everybody else? That would be cool, wouldn't it? Sure it would, but you can't be a werewolf without getting bitten first. "I played in a band for about 5 years, from the time I was 14 until I was 19, and that band was really bad. We actually put out a 7 inch or some crap on a Chicago label." The band? "It was called **Yellow No. 5**, and there's probably 20 of them out there now, but at the time it was an original name. But it was just a drunken mess, it was like if **Love Battery** couldn't keep their shit together, it was like two guitarists and a bass player, and we were all soloing the whole time. It was fun, though." After that, Johnny spent a few years in the basement with an 8 track. "I didn't have anyone else to play with," he explains, "so I just recorded everything myself." The results of the Johnny Flash solo project? "Mud. It sounded like psychedelic mud." Soon after, Johnny finally found some players that were hurling towards a similar destiny. "I got the guitarist (**Vivian Camaro**), he's a friend of mine that came back from Chicago, he was the only one that could play the songs. I give him the solos. That's his jerk-off time." The back end comes courtesy of **Larry Lava** on bass, and of course, the secret super villain **Holy Goat** on drums. "He was working at a costume shop at the time, and got a goat mask. I have no idea why or how it stuck, I don't know what we were thinking, but it stuck." You've got to wonder, though — doesn't he ever show up at practice and say, "look, I don't want to wear





the fucking goat mask?" "No. No, he doesn't." Johnny laughs. "He's good with that. We've done a lot of work on the mask, so it's well-ventilated. It's really hard to see out of that mask, so when he's at home, he practices with his eyes shut."

The early days of the Lanternjack found the rest of the band in equally extravagant states of dress. Think early **New York Dolls** and shudder appropriately. "Our first show ever, we played at a community center. We had this big bass player back then, he dressed up as 'Maude'. I don't know how I was dressed, but it probably wasn't much better." The cross-dressing, he explains, was largely the results of desperate geography. "Detroit is such a hard fuckin' sell. At the time we got together (1998), no one was playing rock and roll except for the **Trash Brats** and **Queen Bee**. There was no way to get people's attention, it was so uncool to be playing rock that it was the only way to get people to look at us. It's toned down a little, because we were like, completely in drag before, and it got to be a pain in the ass, because you're drinking, you want to hang out, and you've got to put fuckin' lipstick on. So, that got old fast. Now we want to strip it down even more. I don't want to worry about what shirt I'm wearing when it's time to rock." The band's name even reflected the bait-and-switch of men in dresses. "There was this old, old dictionary that my dad had from the 1800s that got passed down," Johnny tells me. I got it from that. It's an old nautical term. It's a trick. Like if someone sees swamp gas, and they think it's a ghost, they got *Lanternjacked*."

## LET ME SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE

"I'm not going to name any names, but I went to a 'Rock' concert a couple of months ago with two well known bands, and there's this guy screaming about 'Rock and Roll ain't dead!' and he's ripping on boy-bands, you know, all this 'processed, choreographed bullshit', and blah, blah blah. And they're up there drinking their mineral water, and I swear to God, the two guitarists knew, on the exact note, when to jump up on the risers. They jumped up on these fucking boxes, and I'm like, 'Wait a minute, this asshole's complaining about this choreographed stuff, and it was just as choreographed as anything else. When he was talking in between songs, he had a dialogue written out, because the sound guy knew when to put delay on his voice. And I like the damn band, but it's bullshit, dude.'" The Lanternjack has a problem with phony rock and roll and with phony rock and rollers, from power tripping Space Lords to their own copy caters in Detroit. "You go to these shows, and there's 10 bands playing together. And the reason that they're all playing together is that they're safe behind the veil of mediocrity. You get ten bands together, they all have 30 friends, and the place is packed, right? Everybody's happy. Well, I'm not happy." The Lanternjack are one of those dying breeds of bands that actually believe that rock requires danger, fire, passion, and pain to make it work. "A lot of the guys playing in bands these days are like tourists. They get off stage, and they're designing a building or something. They go home and play Playstation, have some pie, and talk about how good the show was, and that's just like, *whatever*, man." Without a lick or a promise of scenester credibility, the Lanternjack forged ahead on their own terms. Early results were not pleasant.

"We went through a time when we were playing in basements in Ypsi and Ann Arbor, and it was...it was *bad*", he says. "I remember we played with bands that used like, Atari video consoles. Ann Arbor art rock bands, because we couldn't get a show at first." As time went on, however, the band began honing their

live attack into the unruly beast that it's become, and the crowds, for better or worse, started showing up. "There's people in the indie rock scene that 'get it' that come to the shows, and then there's the beer-guzzling derelicts that I grew up with from down in the sticks, so it's a really big clash," he explains. "So that's why some people have deemed as un-cool, or whatever, because there's not 150 mod guys hanging out with their 150 mod girlfriends, because that's what the scene is like here. Everybody has their uniform. You go to an indie rock show, everybody's dressed like Clark Kent. You go to a garage rock show, and everybody's dressed like the Fonz. And it's safe for them, nothing's coming in, nothing's coming out." The Lanternjack have sought to shake up this complacency with the two things they do best — rip snorting rock and psychopathic behavior. "I don't know," he says, when I ask him if there's any set vision to the Lanternjack live experience. "It's just drunkenness, really." He cites some typical moments. "I don't know if they were just going with the show or what, but I've had a couple chicks just smack me right in the nuts." He laughs. "Once I was wearing this necklace. It was pretty much like that army dog tags shit, and this chick just grabbed it from the back of my neck and just twisted it, so that it was choking me, and she just dragged me across the stage. Dude, pretty much any chick can kick my ass. I think that's one of the reasons that I really haven't got my ass kicked yet, because guys look at me, and they just go, *'whatever, dude.'*" I ask him if his onstage persona as crazed sex god has resulted in any stalker fans. "We've had some chicks that were on the verge of that, yeah, but luckily they didn't know where we lived, so they couldn't come over and boil our dogs, or anything."

There have been some incidents, however, when it wasn't so fun to be Johnny Flash. "A lot of times you get fucked up, and you start fucking with people, and you don't always recognize the people in the crowd. Lately, it's been getting a little fucked up, because I'll go to the bar and some guy will start a fight with me, and I don't even know him. But he knows who I am, you know what I mean?" Right. You're the loudmouth with the microphone who was just threatening to kill him on stage. "I think it's their problem if they can't separate the two," he says. "If I'm at the bar to get a drink, I'm getting a drink. I don't have on fucking Rockabilly gear, I'm not looking for a fight." The confrontational aspect of the Lanternjack, then, is a performance. "Exactly. And a lot of these meatheads can't tell the difference." Not only that, but like bull fighting fans, the Lanternjack faithful now expect a little frenzied violence with their rock. "Recently, there's been a couple of shows where I was too hungover from the night before, so I just stood there, and I think people came away disappointed because they wanted to see a car crash and all they got was a fender bender." Regardless of the damage done on any given night, the Lanternjack show is a pulse-pounder, and Johnny hopes to spread the band's tendrils outside of Detroit soon. "We've stayed mostly in the Midwest so far," he tells me. "I don't see the point in playing in Kansas City, say, and then turning around and driving back home. They'll just forget you in a month, it's like wasted time. I'd rather take it over, you know, take over all the neighboring cities so that everybody knows who you are. Then you're building a foundation. If you're playing New York, then you're playing Kansas City, then playing Miami — it just doesn't work." The Lanternjack, then, are more Napoleon-



# HIT SQUAD

like in their approach to the rock. "Exactly. Just like Napoleon. You can't take over Canada from Detroit, man. You've got spread it out."

## THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FREE PORN



What did the funeral guy from Slacker say? "I may live badly, but at least I don't have to work to do it." Well, that pioneering spirit lives on in Johnny Flash. "The other guys have jobs. I'm kind of the bottom feeder," he laughs. "I'm always scrounging around. I used to drive a truck, but after awhile, I'd get home and I'd be so tired I didn't want to go anywhere. And then I got to the point where I didn't want to write, and I was just like, 'You know what? I'd rather be broke.' I haven't worked for about a year, but I get by." The follow-up to "Hussy", then, will not be produced from money sweat and bled from the fingers of the Flash, but from some powerful outside source with pockets full of green and an unwavering faith in the Lanternjack's Super Rock. At least, that's the plan. "We were hoping to have somebody finance the record," Johnny explains. "Of course, we were hoping that awhile ago, so I've just been writing and writing. We've got 20 new songs. We only play 2 songs from 'Hussy' live, because in my opinion the songs have gotten so much better. So I want to do it, but I don't want to take the local approach, I don't want to be driving around to record stores consigning records, because I think the songs are too good, and I think somebody ought to come here and give us a million dollars to record them."

I think so too. After about 30 seconds of the burning, Hell-bound riff of the Lanternjack's signature "I Got Life", I was on the phone to friends and loved ones, babbling about the greatest rock and roll band in America. Turns out I was the first one, outside of Detroit. How did this happen? Junk Records, Sal from Electric Frankenstein, Jeff fuckin' Bale — where were you guys? "We don't know anybody," Johnny sighs. "We'd like to, though. But I swear to god, I don't keep up with the scene, so I don't know who's who or what's what at all." Location seems to play into this rock and roll situation as well. "People that are in these so called rock bands around here, if they're from, say, the Northern suburbs, they can form any kind of shitty band and everybody knows about them in a week, because the press is all over them. But us? Nobody cares, nobody writes about us, because we're from *Downriver*." Downriver, as another Detroit rock star recently told me, is the "Sleazy part of an already sleazy city." Perfect for a band of criminal savages like the Lanternjack to hide out in. Not so perfect for launching a career. "If it sounds seedy, that's because it is," Johnny admits. "The press hate it. I used to say, yeah, I'm from Downriver," he drawls, sounding embarrassed, "But now I'm like, yeah, I'm from Downriver...*asshole*. But it's hard to get out of here, man. Nobody gets out of here." So that's the key to the Lanternjack's baffling obscurity. Nobody comes to visit them in the ghetto. "Yeah, so I don't know what's going on, I don't keep up with the scene, I don't know any of the new bands. When I started this band, I had to stop listening to

everything for awhile, just to get a new perspective on things. Which actually turned out to be an old perspective." The Lanternjack sound, the napalm thunder and bad craziness, turns out to have ancient territorial roots, but not the ones you expect. "There was this old band from Ann Arbor called **Jacks**. They weren't rock and roll at all, they were more like the **Birthday Party** I really got into them, the dissonant notes, or whatever. So I'd say it's a cross between **Jacks** and the **Cult**. Every review I read in Detroit always says *Stooges*, *Stooges*, *Stooges*. But I listen to our fuckin' record, and I go, 'OK, I'm going to find some **Stooges** in here,' and I really can't. But people keep pegging us with that." Half-assed rock journalist rule number 1: Namedrop the **Stooges** and the **MC5** every chance that you get, even if the band sounds nothing like either of them. It gets the chicks. "The newer stuff sounds, to me, like a heavy metal **Doors**," Johnny says. "If I'm going to rip somebody off, I'd rather just rip off one of my old songs." That's the part of the story that gets swallowed up in a flurry of goat killing and crowd baiting — the songs of Johnny Flash. Feral little things, with snapping teeth and blinding claws. Rock and Roll with the leash snapped off. "Everybody's attention span is so short these days," Johnny says. "Everybody's got ADD now, for whatever reason — drugs, television — so why would you bore them with the same chord over and over?" He's explaining his songwriting philosophy, the careful construction of a sloppy science. "People can't wait ten minutes for an oil change, they're not going to sit through a 4-minute song." Lanternjack songs are direct hits, rabbit punches to the brain that do unto others, then split. "That's what it boils down to," Johnny says. "Everybody else sounds like...*pussies*, for lack of a better term." The brevity of the songs is one of the band's signatures. Another is the sin driving, outlaw anthem lyrics. "They're about booze and sex, basically," he explains. "But I've been venturing out in the new shit. I've been going back to a little more of the *writing* aspect. I'm not going to say the word 'poetry', but some of the lyrics are more of a story. Most of them are as dirty as the old ones, though." If even half of them are autobiographical, then Johnny is a man both blessed and cursed in equal measure. "Oh, they all are," he admits. "I never understood people that make up stories, like 'Jack and Diane', you know? 'I went out and ran over a kid in my car' — well, I know you didn't," he laughs. "Because then you'd be in jail, not singing songs, so what the fuck are you talking about? If people are writing songs about something they made up, it's because they don't have their own stories. It goes back to the Playstation thing. They spent too much time playing video games, and not enough time living their lives."

Don't be like those chumps, brothers and sisters. Join the Lanternjack's Super Rock revolution, and live a little. ([www.the-lanternjack.com](http://www.the-lanternjack.com))

## SLEAZEGRINDER'S TOP 10:

**Nixon Now** — "Solution Revolution" ([www.nixonnow.com](http://www.nixonnow.com)) Not since **Thee Hypnotics** has a band tunneled so deeply into the poisoned guts of the **Stooges** and emerged napalm-scarred but victorious.

**Boogie Man** — demo ([www.boogieman.nu](http://www.boogieman.nu)) Like some dark and hoary hybrid of **Roadsaw** and **Soundgarden** (and no, smartass, they're not the same thing), Sweden's Boogie Man play galloping stoner-grunge anthems that manage to sound suicidal and heroic all at once.



**Jack the Hot Rod** — "500" ([www.jackthehotrod.com](http://www.jackthehotrod.com)) The revenge of Seattle rock has begun with Jack's insanely catchy, flash rocking power pop. That's right, motherfucker, they sound like **Urge Overkill**.

**The Accident** — s/t ([www.the-accident-com](http://www.the-accident-com)) Bloody-knuckled trucker metal by a bunch of bad asses in **Venom** t-shirts. Like **Fu Manchu**, all their songs are about cars. I think "Riding Shotgun" might have a whole different meaning to the Accident, though.

**Dog Leg Preacher** — s/t ([www.screamingskunk.com](http://www.screamingskunk.com)) Hands down, the greatest band name I've ever heard. Dog Leg Preacher play street metal that's so rooted in the 80s that I want to pull out the fingerless gloves and protest the Cold War. Did I mention they're bikers? Goddamn, these cats are cool.

**Gideon Smith and the Dixie Damned** — "Southern Gentlemen" (Smallstone) **Halfway To Gone?** Gid and the boys are All The Way Gone, baby. A southern fried hammer-down orgy of dusty, sun-baked grooves and lowdown stoner rock riffs.

**The Brought Low** — s/t ([www.teepeerecords.com](http://www.teepeerecords.com)) **Mother Love Bone** lives, sort of, in this stellar band of New York hard rockers. Equal parts **Black Crowes** slink and druggy, glammy grunge. This is pretty fuckin' close to the best record of the year. In my universe, anyway.

**The Monoxides** — "The Free Release of Energy" (<http://monoxides.tripod.com>) Yet another bunch of Canadians obsessed with

## SLEAZEGRINDER

**Grand Funk**, the Monoxides play 70's fuzz rawk laced with thundering **Thin Lizzy** riffs and the kind of soaring, arena rock vocal harmonies that previously only **Raging Slab** could handle. The only reason that this album couldn't have been made in 1974 is because none of the Monoxides were born yet.

**Scissorfight** — "Man Trapping for Sport and Profit" (Tortuga) Good lord. Every song on this record seems calculated to drive the listener into a fist-fighting, coke-snorting, ass-fucking frenzy. Although they sound more like **ZZ Top** with every record, this is still a monstrous beast of punk-choked redneck metal. Every copy should come with a prescription for Valium. You'll need it.

**Trash Can Darlings** — "Gore Gore Boys and Splatter Pussies" ([www.trashcandarlings.com](http://www.trashcandarlings.com)) I swear to God, I just found the next **Dogs D'Amour**. Sweden's finest gang of drunk-en gypsies.

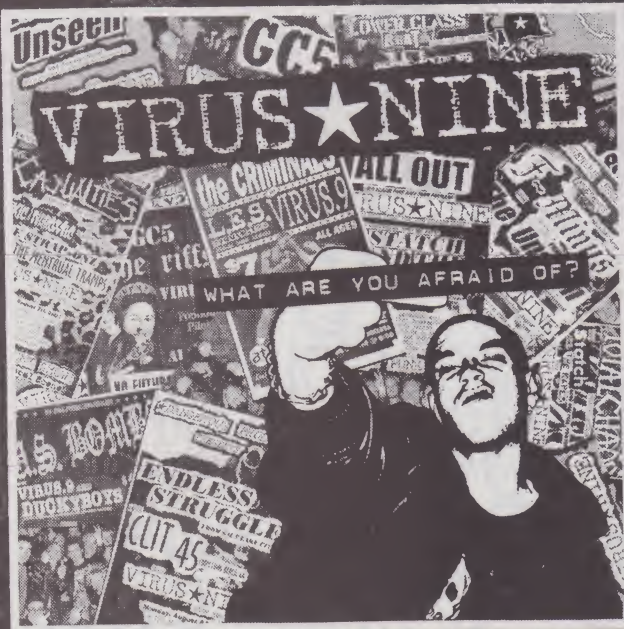
**Next Issue:** More rock, I imagine. War, she's a whore — Sleazegrinder 11.01

[Kenzilla69@hotmail.com](mailto:Kenzilla69@hotmail.com)

Ken McIntyre, 42 Cedar St.#3, Somerville, MA 02143

Further exploits of the Sleazegrinder can be found at [www.therawk.com](http://www.therawk.com) ☺

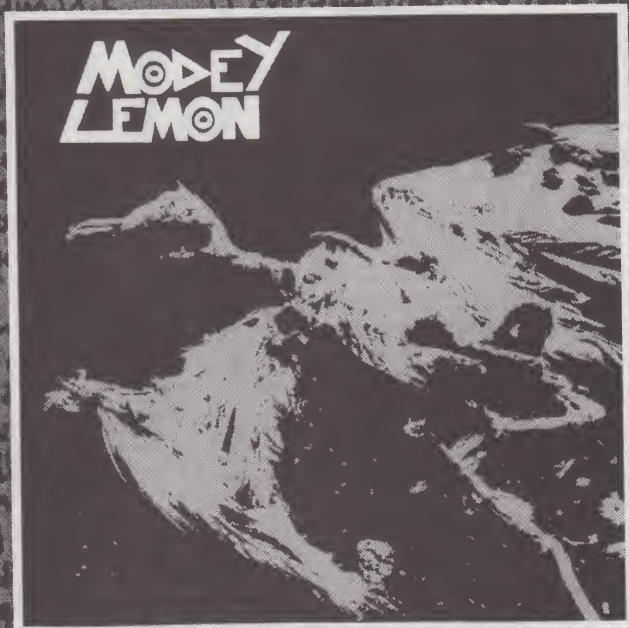
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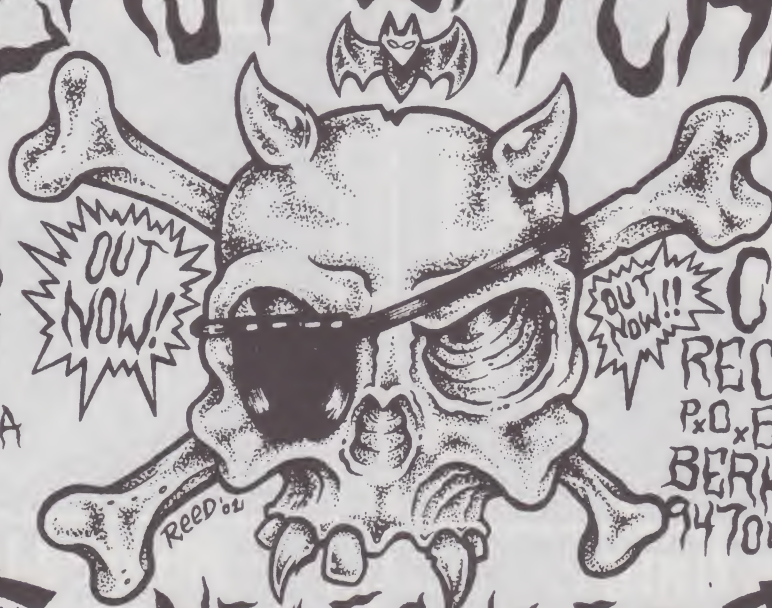
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# BOOK REVIEWS

Steven Blush, *American Hardcore: A Tribal History*  
Edited and Designed by George Petros  
(Los Angeles: Feral House, 2001)

Back in the early eighties, while their DC contemporaries were dishing up a steady diet of meat and potatoes hardcore, Maryland's No Trend began churning out an ungodly squawk that was equal parts Discharge, Joy Division, and Ornette Coleman (if Ornette Coleman had no musical ability). They weren't the first to do it; New York's "No Wave" bands had been fusing punk with jazz and other sounds for a while, but those groups were doing it for the artsy-fartsy downtown Manhattan types. No Trend, on the other hand, took the skronk directly to the hardcore kids - a bunch of cornfed teenage nihilists who had never heard of James Chance and would have happily stomped his malnourished junkie ass into an unrecognizable pulp of blood, pomade, and sharkskin if he tried any of that Performance Art 101-style audience confrontation bullshit with them. No Trend seemed to revel in torturing hardcore's devotees, so much so that they were regarded as key players in a genre dubbed "anti-hardcore." Given No Trend's antipathy toward the mohawked masses, it's a little surprising that Steven Blush, who put out four of the band's records and toured the country as their manager/roadie, would pen the first history of American hardcore, but it may explain why Blush doesn't always seem to have a firm command of the subject matter.

In *American Hardcore*, Blush attempts to document every hardcore scene in the United States. This task isn't quite as daunting as you might expect, since Blush steadfastly maintains that hardcore lasted from 1980 to 1986 and not a second longer (somebody better go break this to the kids in the pit at the next Super Bowl of Hardcore - and then run like hell). Nevertheless, it's a pretty tall order. Does he succeed? The answer is a resounding "kinda."

Blush interviewed just about everyone you can think of for "American Hardcore", from the famous (e.g., Jello Biafra, Ian MacKaye) to the well-known (e.g., Al Barile, Jack Grisham) to the downright obscure (e.g., nine-toed ex-Misfit Bobby Steele and Juilliard-trained Joey Ism of sicko-punks Ism), and the book works best when he utilizes the oral history format and allows his interviewees to tell the

story. The portions of text written by Blush, on the other hand, are riddled with errors. To give just a few examples, Jan Paul Beahm (AKA Darby Crash) is referred to as "Jon Paul Beahm", the release date of Rikk Agnew's 1982 solo album "All by Myself" is pushed back three years, and 7 Seconds' massively popular "The Crew" LP is deleted from the band's oeuvre. Blush's mistakes are by no means limited to hardcore; he relocates North Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood into South Philly and saddles former Big 6 accounting firm Peat Marwick with the more formal, yet completely incorrect, moniker "Peter Marwick." And then there's the spelling. Blush misspells everything from Antiseen ("Antiscene") to the Flower Leperds ("Flower Lepers") to the word "your". This last mistake is especially unfortunate, since it means that every other page of the D.C. chapter features the header "Flex Yor Head."

Individually, none of these mistakes is all that egregious, but when taken as a whole they reduce the book to a shitty, fanzine quality publication and undermine the reader's confidence in the veracity of Blush's assertions. The weird thing is, Feral House Press bucks publishing orthodoxy and credits the guy who allegedly edited *American Hardcore* - George Petros - right there on the title page, as though he deserves to be singled out for the excellent job he did. After viewing George's handiwork, however, most readers will probably conclude that he is: a) in the fourth grade; or b) a complete fucking moron. In the age of Spell Check and Internet search engines, there is simply no excuse for editing that's this half-assed.

Despite this major flaw, *American Hardcore* still has a lot going for it. The chapter on Black Flag and SST is nothing short of brilliant. Utilizing great quotes from people like Glen E. Friedman, Joe Carducci, Mike Watt, and Dez Cadena, Blush chronicles SST's metamorphosis from the nation's preeminent punk rock record label to a sorry crashpad for loser pot rock bands like Lawndale, Painted Willie, and Swa (sorry, Chuck). Along the way, he dispenses plenty of information about the reasons behind Black Flag's sundry personnel changes - information that was apparently omitted from Henry Rollins' *Get in the Van* in order to make room for more of those excruciating meditations on the temperament of Regis Ginn's toolshed.

The coverage of the era's other major scenes like D.C., New York, San Francisco, and Texas is also quite good. Some may complain that the lesser known scenes are given short shrift. Indeed, as a native Philadelphian, I was a little disheartened to see that the scene to which I devoted so much of my youth merited only three-fourths of a page. But let's face it, I'm probably one of the few people who actually wants to read a comprehensive history of Y.D.I. and Flag of Democracy. And besides, Blush treats us Philly guys a lot better than the New Hampshire kids who are derided as white trash and then informed that their state "had no HC culture to speak of."

Unlike some other punks turned authors, Blush isn't afraid to dish the dirt. He alleges that Butthole Surfers' vocalist Gibby Haynes' crack habit was so enormous that dealers in his hometown of Austin, Texas, began referring to extra large bags as "gibbies." He accuses John Brannon, the greatest frontman that hardcore ever produced, of showing up junk sick for his *American Hardcore* interview. But his most bizarre allegation is that Jello Biafra's life was ruined by Frank Discussion of the Feederz (whose "Jesus Entering From the Rear" managed the remarkable feat of being equally offensive to homosexuals and conservative Christians), who holed up at Chez Jello while on the lam from the Feds and subsequently took off with Biafra's wife and money. One can only imagine the ensuing conversation between Discussion, an adherent of situationist "ethics," and Biafra:

BIAFRA: Where the hell are you going with my wife and money, Frank?

DISCUSSION: Heyyyyy, Jello, come on buddy, if a man were starving to death, would it be wrong for him to steal some money to buy something to eat?

BIAFRA: Uh, no. I guess not.

DISCUSSION: Okay, well say he wasn't starving but was just really, really horny...

*American Hardcore* looks pretty good, too; it's full of great photos and flyers from back in the day. It was designed by George Petros, whom, if memory serves, I maligned a few paragraphs back. So, in the interest of fairness, nice job with the layout, George.



# BOOK REVIEWS

If you can put up with all of the errors, then you'll probably find *American Hardcore* to be an informative and entertaining read. If not, then wait a while because Blush has assembled all of the right ingredients and with a little bit of fact checking and a whole lot of Spell Check, he could put together a truly stellar second edition.

-Reviewed by J. Hunter Bennett

## **Johnny Thunders...In Cold Blood by Nina Antonia**

(London: Cherry Red Books, 2000)

Johnny Thunders' legend status is a testament to our society's fascination with self-destructive behavior. During his nearly twenty-year career, Thunders released two enjoyable but lightweight LPs with The New York Dolls, one abysmally-produced album with The Heartbreakers, a string of fairly forgettable solo albums save for one - the stellar "So Alone" - and countless spotty albums cobbled together from outtakes and live recordings that he licensed to record companies in order to scrape together some drug money. But wherever he went, he was playing to packed houses. Undoubtedly, many of these "fans" were there not there to see Johnny "Thunders" Genzale, the talented guitarist, but JOHNNY THUNDERS, the death-defying drug fiend who berated audiences, passed out on stage, and was immortalized (or, more accurately, mortalized) by The Replacements in the song "Johnny's Gonna Die." *Johnny Thunders... In Cold Blood*, the newly reissued and updated first book by accomplished rock biographer Nina Antonia, attempts to reconcile the man with the legend.

*In Cold Blood* is a first-rate history of Thunders' musical exploits. The early chapters are all Dolls, following Thunders and his four outer-borough cohorts who, unburdened by musical ability, decked themselves out in slut couture and began grinding out a kind of remedial rock and roll that would capture the imaginations of misfits and freaks everywhere. Antonia amply documents the combination of forces that led to The Dolls' quick demise, not the least of which was Malcolm McLaren's harebrained scheme to turn the band into Communists. From there, it's on to The Heartbreakers, punk's first (but sadly, not last) "supergroup." Antonia recounts how Thunders and his bandmates fabricated stories of gang affilia-

tions which were eaten up by a music press oblivious to the fact that the band members were so strung out that they were incapable of beating themselves off, much less beating anyone up. Like The Dolls, The Heartbreakers self-destructed quickly, but not before turning the British punk scene on to heroin.

In the eighties, Thunders' career degenerated into a morass of squandered record company advances and sloppy gigs fronting pick-up bands made up of starry-eyed fans. Antonia does a far better job weaving these chaotic years into a coherent narrative than anyone could reasonably expect, although she does neglect to explain how it is that Thunders came to play guitar on John Waite's (yes, that John Waite) "Mask of Smiles" album. Though Thunders' mysterious death and botched autopsy have kept Internet conspiracy-theorists typing into the wee small hours of the morning, Antonia thankfully declines to add fuel to the fire. She points out that Thunders was not long for this world anyway, since he was suffering from lymphoma and was afraid to seek treatment. Antonia conducted extensive interviews with Thunders' friends, family members, bandmates, and managers in preparation for this book, and it shows. If you're interested in the "who, what, where and when" of Thunders' life, *In Cold Blood* is the only book you'll ever need.

*In Cold Blood* is somewhat less successful when it comes to explaining the "why" of Thunders' life. One can't help but wonder how Thunders, a former altar boy, became the poster boy for excess, especially since he neither drank nor smoked when he joined The Dolls. Although former Heartbreakers' manager Lee Black Childers asserts that it was the death of Dolls' drummer Billy Murcia that pushed Thunders over the edge, *In Cold Blood* offers little corroboration for this statement. Thunders was interviewed for the book but he wasn't particularly candid about his personal demons - he acknowledged that his drug use was a way of dealing with problems, but never explained what the problems were. The lack of insight into Thunders' psyche doesn't really detract from the book, it's just that Antonia did such a great job of getting Peter Perrett to open up about his life for her book *The One and Only* that one can't help but be slightly disappointed by her inability to get Thunders to do the same.

Still, the facts of Thunders' life, coupled with Antonia's inimitable writing style, make *In Cold Blood* a riveting read. Antonia writes interesting, lively sentences which, in a literary genre dominated by the subliterate ramblings of rock stars and the dry professorial musings of people who secretly wish they were rock stars, are a breath of fresh air. For example, the book begins, "Before the fifties died of an exquisitely painless form of cancer and fear, blood cells tingled to Dion and stolen Lucky Strikes." Later, when describing the Dolls' decision to sign with a management company, Antonia writes, "[i]f being in love means never having to say you're sorry, then 'In Perpetuity' means having to say you're sorry forever. . ." To be perfectly honest, I'm not entirely sure what either of these sentences mean, but they sure were fun to read.

And just in case you needed any more reasons to buy the book, *In Cold Blood* comes with a good quality compact disc of Thunders' outtakes and live cuts, as well as a surprisingly coherent interview. There are also dozens of cool photos of Thunders (usually looking really zonked-out) scattered throughout the book. If you're a Thunders fan or just someone who enjoys reading well-written rock biographies, you need to own *In Cold Blood*.

-Reviewed by J. Hunter Bennett

## **Patti Smith: An Unauthorized Biography by Victor Bockris and Roberta Bayley (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999)**

The explosion of great exciting original rock music in the second half of the '70s was one of those once in a lifetime flukes. The evolution of rock that began with Elvis continued through the '60s, but came to a screeching halt at the end of the decade, as the record companies saw that there was much more money to be made off albums than there ever was off singles. Rock 'n' roll went from 3-minute masterpieces to 40 minutes of pretentious irrelevance. After years of being given up for dead by all but diehard fans, rock music developed underground with a pent-up fury, when a new breed of zealots took to the stage and studio in order to take the art form anyplace where it hadn't already been.

One of the places where the revitalization of rock music began was the Big Apple, with bands like Television, Ramones, Talking Heads, etc. One of the



# BOOK REVIEWS

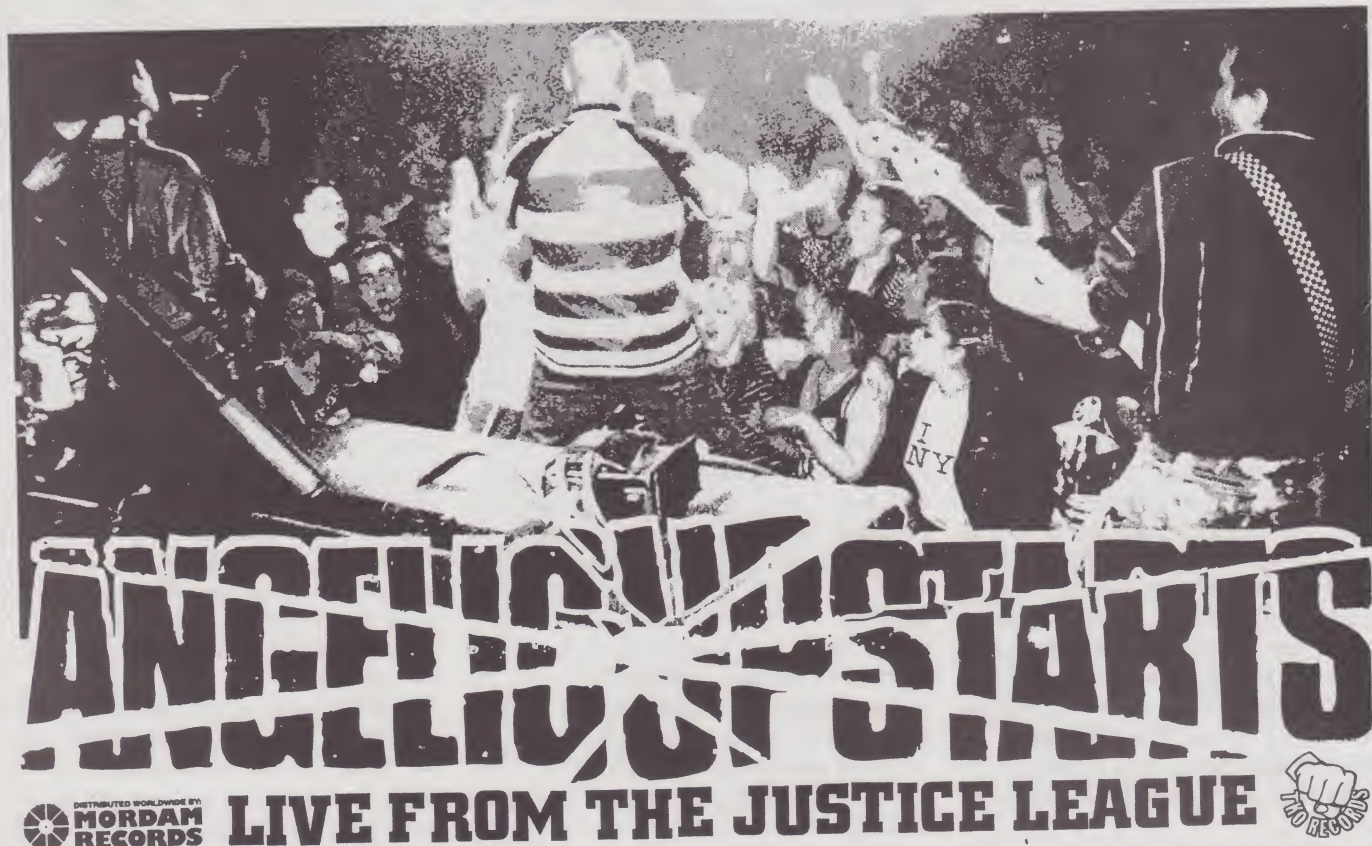
unlikely stars the NYC scene produced was Patti Smith, leader of the Patti Smith Group. Before becoming a rock singer Patti was a NYC scenester, a social climbing groupie with a burning ambition to be someone - she just didn't know who, or what. She had been a critic for *Rolling Stone* magazine, a painter, a poet, and an actress in off Broadway theatre. Her closest collaborator had been the late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. After Mapplethorpe decided that he preferred guys, Patti hooked up with married playwright Sam Shepard, earning the lead role in one of his plays before Shepard returned to his wife. *Patti Smith*, the book, reveals a surprisingly numerous string of relationships with male celebrities who helped advance Patti's career. Patti's '70's career path has an uncanny parallel to Madonna's career in the '80s. She may have even taken a page out of Patti's book, first by moving to New York and then by sleeping with all the right people on the path to becoming some kind

of star, whether it be singer, actress, dancer, or author. If a Madonna biography could justly be titled *Sleeping Her Way To The Top*, Patti's might have been called *Sleeping Her Way To #18*.

*Patti Smith* is, as the title indicates, an unauthorized biography, one in for which the authors, who knew Patti well, chose not to interview her. When asked about the contents, co-author Bayley said "...it's a factual account, otherwise it couldn't have gotten past Patti's very powerful lawyers." When asked if a better Patti book could be written, Bayley said, "No doubt there is, especially when those closest to Patti are free to speak without the fear of banishment from Patti's world and the reprisals of powerful music business players." I question whether a better book about Patti really could be written. Bayley and Bockris saw these events develop in real time, and by combining that with interviews of numerous Patti intimates, they probably tell you way more than you really need to know about Patti.

PSG put out four albums starting with "Horses", which is probably as successful a fusion of rock music and poetry as we're likely to hear. It fulfilled the promise of their amazing indie single, "Hey Joe/Piss Factory", which was later reissued on Sire. Those releases encapsulate a magical point in history when rock music transcended all previous boundaries. A magic moment where for the first time rock musicians were consciously creating art, not records intended for a mass audience, but rather for a handful of individuals who related to the music on a much deeper level.

PSG's second album "Radio Ethiopia" is the closest they ever got to the punk movement that Patti will always be associated with, due more to her intersection with punk in space and time than her actual musical style. "Radio Ethiopia" represents what PSG sounded like in concert better than the other albums. PSG were truly great live in the '70s, but you can't recreate that moment in time. It's too bad they



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# BOOKREVIEWS

never issued a live album, although there are some good bootlegs, some of which are listed in the book's discography. "Easter" was a solid if unspectacular third album, and then the disappointing "Wave" ended the band's run as Patti got married to MC5 member Fred Smith and raised two kids. She was one of those rare performers who got out on top, leaving fans with memories of magical concerts. At the point Patti when breaks up the band this book is strangely only half done, so there's still plenty to read about Patti and Fred and her/their attempts at a comeback.

Patti Smith certainly earned her place in history. She was the first important female talent in rock to emerge at a time when women performers had almost completely disappeared from the scene, pre-saging an era when they would reemerge and achieve equality with men.

-Reviewed by Mel Cheplowitz

## ***Spinning Blues Into Gold: The Chess Brothers and the Legendary Chess Records***

by Nadine Cohodas

(New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000)

It's hard to believe, after reading this book, that any record biz figure ever worked harder than Leonard Chess, and not so hard to believe that, by virtue of that, he ended up with damn near the whole enchilada - label, stable, studio, pressing plant, distributorship, even a radio station - despite knowing very little about music at the git-go. Though most rock and roll fans would probably pick this up anticipating juicy stories about Wolf, Waters, Williamson, Berry, and Bo (and she does share a few of those), Cohodas' intention is to shine a light on Chess' hard-nosed and untutored business acumen, the complex interaction of two sets of Chicago emigrants (the Chesses, from Poland, and Mississippi-born blacks who came to the Windy City for a better life), and the turbulent changes experienced by the record industry between the end of World War II and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. In doing so, Cohodas writes, thinks, and researches so skillfully that such fans will forget to be disappointed.

The predominant images of Leonard Chess that the reader is left with by the last page this book are of the man as a "CEO" (how things have changed) - busting his hump, driving from city to city to push his records; expanding his opera-

tions just ahead of the curve at every crucial moment, mainly through utter involvement, vigilant awareness, native intelligence, and indefatigable drive; expertly rifling his biz contacts for the right man to lead him to success in unexplored areas (fear of the unknown was unknown to this guy, as exemplified by his purchase of a radio station despite having no experience at all in running one - he turned it into a major success, of course); profanely cajoling his artists into top performances in the studio; and stubbornly keeping things simple and personal. It's really only at the moment that Chess begins to remove himself from the record-making process and expand his operations beyond the capability of his direct control - late in the game, nearly 20 years after he got his feet wet - that the quality of the company's music begins to fade. Even so, with artists like Etta James, Little Milton, and Billy Stewart continuing to score hits, "fade" is a relative term. What happens to the Chess machine almost immediately after the brothers sell it is bitter telling, but I'll leave that to you to find out.

I would assume that any reader of these pages has heard claims that the Chess brothers exploited their mostly undereducated artists, and Cohodas doesn't shy away from these topics. However, she shows that, though the label specialized in creative accounting (Alan Freed getting publishing credit on "Maybellene" is the most famous example - but would it have become a hit otherwise, one wonders?), it also specialized in, shall we say, generously blind accounting: no records were kept of hospital bills, mortgage, and car payments, and bail Chess routinely, willingly, and promptly paid out to keep his artists on their feet. Paternalistic? Yep; Cohodas says as much. But that generosity exceeded what artists at other labels could expect and, among the many Chess hitmakers quoted in *Spinning*, only Bo Diddley appears adamant in his claims, and even he seems to be losing intensity. Cohodas also reveals that Chess was passionately committed to serving the needs of the black community. He never jumped on the teen idol bandwagon; in fact, the only white artist to make a rock-historic mark with the label was Bobby "See You Later, Alligator" Charles, and he didn't even have a hit with that, his most famous composition. And when Chess

purchased his first radio station, it was strictly programmed by and for the Windy City's black community.

Particularly inspiring is Cohodas' account of how Chess' wisdom, vision, and elbow grease, in league with that of the Biharis at Modern, Wexler and the Erteguns at Atlantic, and Phillips at Sun, led to a postwar independent musical revolution that soundly kicked the collective asses of the product turned out by the big boys. Could we use a repeat performance today! More effectively than any of the other indie heads, Chess was able to diversify what his company had to offer. Though the label is most famous for its blues catalog, its doo-wop, rock and roll, and especially jazz output put it on the competitive map. You will also learn about the Chess brothers' skill at building relationships with influential dee-jays, and their inevitable run-in with the federal payola investigators. If you're like me, you'll develop a new appreciation for what payola was, and find it difficult to avoid vomiting when you realize that - after a genius like Alan Freed had his career and life destroyed - the industry later simply streamlined the practice into the perfectly legal stealth operation it is today, with one big difference: instead of a little money and modest "services" being paid and rendered to advance the cause of great music, we now have loooooooooooooong green and blandishments fit for a sheik being proffered to turn shit into hits. Even sadder is Cohodas' picture of how a long, successful, potentially prophetic story of interracial cooperation and creativity was suddenly shut down by our culture's (or perhaps our government's) need to kill its most visionary leaders. As is also heart-breakingly examined in Peter Guralnick's *Sweet Soul Music*, thoroughly integrated studios like Chess, Stax, and Muscle Shoals found it impossible to continue in the usual catalytic manner after King's assassination. It isn't hard to see that things have never been the same, either behind the studio glass or behind the doors of our own homes.

Maybe some enterprising young man or woman will pick up this book, take a cue from Chess' fearlessness and work ethic, and launch an attack on the evermore accepted belief that The Corporation has won and that one man might as well not even try. Doubtful. But Cohodas' detailed, impassioned story of an improbable and damn-near-total success is one we need to hear over and over again.

-Reviewed by Phil Overeem ☐



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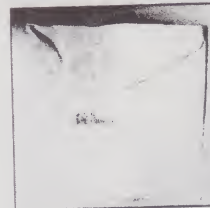
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APRIL 15th: THE SPITS NEW ALBUM





# THE ALMIGHTY TOP TENS

# SHITLIST

## Jeff Bale

- 1) AFRIKA KORPS - "Music to Kill By" CD
- 2) CREATION - live at Cavestomp
- 3) HANGMEN/SUPERSUCKERS - live at Slim's
- 4) HIVES/I.N.C. - live at American Music Hall
- 5) LORDS OF ALTAMONT - live at Sleazefest
- 6) LOVE - CD reissue of first LP
- 7) ROLLING STONES - "Could You Walk on Water" 2XCD
- 8) THOR'S HAMMER - "From Keflavik with Love" CD
- 9) V/A - "Downbeat" CD (Dutch 60s)
- 10) V/A - "Stora Popboxen" 3XCD (Swede 60s)

## Mitch Cardwell (Best of 2001)

- 1) DIRTBOMBS - "Ultraglide In Black" LP
- 2) LOST SOUNDS - everything
- 3) WHITE STRIPES - "White Blood Cells" LP
- 4) BRIEFS - "Hit After Hit" LP
- 5) DETROIT COBRAS - "Life, Love and Leaving" LP
- 6) REDS - "It's About Time" LP
- 7) CLONE DEFECTS - "Blood On Jupiter" CD
- 8) DS-13 - "Killed By The Kids" LP
- 9) FLESHIES - "Kill The Dreamer's Dream" LP
- 11) LIMP WRIST - LP

## Jimi Cheetah

- 1) TOYS THAT KILL - "Citizen Abortion" -CD
- 2) TINA & THE TOTAL BABES - "She's So Tuff" LP

- 3) RAMONES - "R.a.m.o.n.e.s." boot 7"
- 4) Pitch Black - film
- 5) ZOMBIE IV - "Zombie" 7" EP
- 6) ANGRY SAMOANS - "Play The Songs Of Vom" 7"
- 7) CRAMPS - all of their reissues on colored wax
- 8) PRIMA DONNAS - "Drugs, Sex and Discotheques" CD
- 9) FRACAS - CD

## Alan Wright

- 1) BEATLES - "The Star Club" 2xCD
- 2) WIPERS - "Box Set" 3xCD
- 3) BOB DYLAN - "Gaslight Tapes, 1962" CD + other reissues
- 4) VELVET UNDERGROUND - "Quine Tapes" 3xCD/"Final V.U." 4xCD box
- 5) VARIOUS - "Nederbeat: Beat, Bluf en Branie 1963-1969" 5xCD box
- 6) NOMADS - "Up-Tight" CD
- 7) CHICKENS - "Prepare To Plug In" CD
- 8) BUFF MEDWAYS - "This Is This" CD
- 9) GODAMN GENTLEMEN - "Sex Caliber Horsepower" CD
- 10) RC5 - "American Rock 'n' Roll" CD

## Dave Johnson

- 1) JAWBREAKER - "24 Hour Revenge Therapy" CD
- 2) TED LEO/PHARMACISTS - "The Tyranny of

## Distance" CD

- 3) IRON MAIDEN - "Live After Death" 2xCD
- 4) RAINBOW - "S/T" (Remastered) CD
- 5) SILVER JEWEL - "American Water" CD
- 6) FUGAZI - "The Argument" CD
- 7) THE ICARUS LINE - "Mono" CD
- 8) THE ROLLING STONES - "Let it Bleed" CD
- 9) BUILT TO SPILL - "Ancient Melodies Of The Future" CD
- 10) ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT - "The State of the Art is On Fire" CD

## Brett Mathews

- 1) BANE - Live and "Give Blood" CD
- 2) KILL YOUR IDOLS
- 3) THE TIME IN MALTA half of the TIME IN MALTA/BREATHE IN Split
- 4) AMERICAN NIGHTMARE - Best band ever.
- 5) THE SPITS - "Drop Out" CD
- 6) THE CAUSE - "Human Condition" CD and Live
- 7) THE DISTILLERS - "Sing Sing Death House" CD
- 8) SOME KIND OF HATE - CDEP
- 9) BAD RELIGION - "The Process of Belief" CD
- 10) SIREN - 7"

Your fearless leaders through the vast and daunting catacombs of rock 'n' roll recordings. Just so you know who to blame when you plunk down your hard earned cash on a slab of plastic, run home as fast as your little punk legs will carry you and spin it anxiously, only to find it completely, totally and indisputably sucks: Athena Dread (AD), Cyco Logic Loco (CLL), Jeremy Cool (JER), Alan Wright (AW), Tony Slug (TS), John Robb (JR) Brett Mathews (BAM), Jimi Cheetah (JC), Jeff Bale (JB), Dimitri Monroe (DJM), Ramsey Kanaan (RK), Sammy The Mick (STM) Mark Devito (MD), Adam X (X), Mitch Cardwell (MC), Chris Jaluska (CJ) and John Cattivera (JDC)



# SHITLIST



## THE AESTHETICS "Off" CD

Primal noise/rock from New Zealand. Lots of really primitive bashing and yelping, along

with decent instrumental stuff. It's actually pretty easy listening compared to most of the muddy crap associated with this sound.

(MC)

(Mental Telemetry/PO Box 46643/  
Kansas City, MO 64188)

## AIRPORT 5

### "Tower In The Fountain of Sparks" CD

Robert Pollard and Tobin Sprout reunite for the first time since Sprout was in GUIDED BY VOICES., and the results are staggering! A fab collection of catchy, psych-tinged power pop songs. It's all good, but the "hit" is the amazing "Stifle Man Casino," a hook-laden tune that begs repeated plays.

(AW)

(Fading Capt.

Series/www.lunamusic.com)

## AFRIKA KORPS

### "Music To Kill By" CD

I'm sure that many new GIZMOS fans were made in 2001, and this release is for you folks. The AFRIKA KORPS were Kenny Gismo's band while he was in the armed forces, and this reissue of their classic album (with a bunch of bonus material) is as vital to your collection as their Hoosier mofo counterparts. All the fun, charm and love of rock'n'roll that the GIZMOS had. (MC)

(Gulcher/gulcherrecords@aol.com)

## ALKALINE TRIO/HOT WATER MUSIC

### split CD

Seeing as how these might be the

A3's best songs to date, you won't quite grasp how NOT good this band is, but you'll still get an idea (and I expect to see them in Hell for their version of H.W.M.'s "Rooftops"). As for H.W.M., what can you say? They are so good that they even made the TRIO songs they covered sound amazing.

Throw in 2 great new originals for good measure, and you have more than enough reason to buy this.

(BAM)

(www.jadetree.com)



## AMAZING TRANSPARENT MAN "The Measure Of All Things" CD

Eight blasts of energetic pop-punk.

Nothing new here,

but BLINK-182 and SCREECHING WEASEL shouldn't be too ashamed. The covers of "Need You More" and "Girls Just Want To Have Fun" are none too shabby either. (RK)

(Springman/www.springman.com)



## ANGELIC UPSTARTS "Live At The Justice League" CD

As someone who went to every West Coast date on their latest US tour, this

gig was definitely their most lacklustre. But I guess it's a testament to the strength of the sixteen classics showcased here that they still sound remarkably vibrant, fresh, and downright rockin'. A greatest hits package, impeccably performed, with all the classics you'd expect. The true grandfathers of "street-punk." And they've aged gracefully. (RK)  
(TKO/www.tkorecords.com)

## ANGELS IN THE ARCHITECTURE "The Distance In Writing" CD

Ten tracks of finely-produced college/indie/emo blah. How much



more of this shit is out there? Bucketloads, I fear. Totally formulaic and utterly uninspired. (RK)  
(Law Of Inertia

Productions/www.lawofinertia.com )

## ANTIDOTE

### "... Go Pogo" LP

ANTIDOTE has a ripping fast pogo punk rock chaos sound. Hailing from the Netherlands, this band is awesome! The LP comes on a nice clear piece of wax with 12 heavily charged tunes. (CLL)  
(Charged/PO Box 157/High Bridge, NJ 08829)



## ANTISEEN "Hell" CD

This CD compiles the "Hell" 10" and a whole lot of miscellaneous singles. ANTISEEN

are a really popular band among prisoners, trailer trash, and punk fuckin' rockers. While I've never been into them, there is some decent and funny stuff on here (like them covering SUN RA), so I'm sure some of you will shit yer britches over this. (MC)  
(Steel Cage/PO Box 29247/Philadelphia, PA 19125)



## APERS s/t CD

All the bands I've heard from this label seem to be obsessed with the RAMONES. I think

it's a requirement for getting signed. These Netherlands punk rawkers give typical, short, snot-nosed songs about girls and the scene. Personally, I'd rather listen to the GROOVIE GHOULIES. (LD)  
(Stardumb/PO Box 21145/3001 AC Rotterdam/HOLLAND)



# REVIEWS



## AUDIOCRUSH "So You Call These Flowers" CD EP

A new emo "supergroup" (?), with FURY 66 and GOOD RIDDANCE

members. The music is a lot more toned down and mellowed out. Some excellent dual male/female vocals definitely make this a keeper. An auspicious 6-track debut. (RK)  
(Lorelei/PO Box 902/Santa Cruz, CA 95061)



## BACKSTABBERS "To Eleven" CD

Some pretty high-powered punk. All the tunes are turned-up, mid-tempo rockers that

remind me of the equally riffy CATHETERS, but not as good. The tunes are cool, but they drag on a bit too long. Still, it's probably a great thing to see live. (MC)  
(Dead Beat/PO Box 283/Los Angeles, CA 90078)



## BANE "Give Blood" CD

Youth crew shall never die. While many simply recycle the most generic aspects of the

genre, bands like BANE dare to progress beyond the original blueprint. A driving, daring hardcore album. Boston is such fertile ground. (STM)  
(Equal Vision/www.equalvision.com)



## BIGWIG "An Invitation To Tragedy" CD

These dudes may be from the East Coast, but they have the whole SoCal

melodic hardcore sound down to a

T. Throw BAD RELIGION, FACE TO FACE, and a more muscular BLINK-182 together, and BIGWIG will rise triumphantly from the wreckage. An impressive addition to the genre. (RK)  
(Fearless/www.fearlessrecords.com)



## BLACK CAT MUSIC "Hands In The Estuary, Torso In The Lake" CD

Definitely more of the melancholy dirges than the

uplifting anthems. There's hints of rockabilly, and a little swing, making it almost reminiscent of a de-gritted, slower, SOCIAL DISTORTION, but without their punch and melody. Not bad, but somewhat lacking in anything to make it stand out from the sludge. (RK)

(Lookout/www.blackcatmusic.com)

## BLACK FLAG "Revenge" CD

The five-piece, dual guitar line-up caught live at a show in Italy in 1983. There's a decent enough sound, but either ROLLINS sounds really young or the tape has been sped up a bit. It's a real energetic sounding show, though. (AW)  
(Black Sun/no address listed)



## BLACK STAR BRIGADE "Coming Through The Airwaves" 7"

When does their TKO full length come out? This is great

upbeat yet catchy streetpunk with a DROPKICK MURPHYS or RANCID feel to it and a cool dirty production. Five songs to wet your whistle to. (BAM)  
(Cutthroat/8918 Greiner/Houston, TX 77080)



## BLACK WIDOWS "Arocknaphobia" CD

The CD says: "The Black Widows are cool and they don't like you." I've got a

hunch it's true. The mysterious BLACK WIDOWS play some damn fine instrumentals that are just as creepy as they rockin'. This band consists of some pretty highbrow punk'n'rollers, but they'd bite me if I spilled the beans.

Instrumentals that rock! (MC)  
(Vital Gesture/PO Box 46100/Los Angeles, CA 90046)

## BLAST ROCKS "You're Fired" CD

I won't lie to you. The BLAST ROCKS are my favorite band in S.F. I had the pleasure of seeing them a few months ago at the Fillmore, and they blew me away. Combining trashcan percussion, casios, fuzzy guitars and funny lyrics, these three kids are sure to put a smile on your face. (LD)  
(Spam/PO Box 21588/El Sobrante, CA 94820)

## BLITZ "Punk Singles and Rareties, 1980-83" CD

If legendary British Oi band BLITZ had never released another record in the wake of their astonishingly good "All Out Attack" EP (which is included on this CD), they would still deserve their exalted status. But they recorded lots of other fabulous pre-LP material, including several of the rareties showcased here, above all the amazing 1980 and "Time Bomb" demo tracks, the "Razors in the Night" and "Warriors" singles, and "New Age". It's time to dust off your Doc Martens, lads. (JB)  
(Captain Oi/www.captainoi.com)



# SHITLIST



**BLOODPACT/  
REACHING  
FORWARD**  
*split 7"*

Two originals and a MANLIFTING-BANNER cover by each band. REACHING FORWARD are amazing, and play fast RIGHT BRIGADE/FLOORPUNCH shit with great breakdowns. BLOODPACT are more screamy and metal, but still quite enjoyable. I'm looking forward to hearing more from both bands. (BAM)  
(Reflections/reflectionsrecords.com)

**BLUE BUS**

*"Your Mind's Moving Too Fast"*

It is? Well, I guess I'd better slow it down then. Seriously, this mysterious 60'scombo recorded, but never released, this collection of very LOVE-influenced material, and even do a cover of "Signed D.C.". Although pretty cool, it's not quite as earth-shattering as some other folks have made it out to be. (AW)  
(Vee/www.viayl.de)

**BLUE TIP**

*"Post-Mortem Anthem" CD*

Five previously unreleased tracks and five oldies provide the final testament to the last of the bands carrying the remnants of the old DC emo "Revolution Summer" sound. Not quite RITES OF SPRING, but considerably better than I remember them being live, it has to be said. There's a certain laudable drive and enthusiasm which shines through on this one. (RK)  
(Dischord/www.dischord.com)

**BOBBY SOXX**

*"Hate The '80's" 7"*

The few of you who bought this



record the first time around back in '79 already know how great it is. Now you can buy the re-issue and sell your original for the \$200+ worth

on eBay. Riff-ridden garage punk with lots of flavor and attitude. (BAM)  
(stickmewithrayguns.com)



**BODIES**

*"Firepower Is Our  
Business" CD EP*

This is a great band, and I think these are their best songs to date. Or at least

their catchiest. This release originally came out in 1999 on a 12" courtesy of Vulture Rock, and is now seeing the light of day on CD for the first time. Beyond anthemic pop streetpunk with tons of attitude. It's very '77-ish and very necessary, so fetch. (BAM)  
(TKO/4104 24th Street/San Francisco, CA 94114)

**BOSS MARTIANS**

*"Move" CD*

These cats just keep getting better and better. This new CD sorta combines the surf-frat-garage sound of the old BOSS MARTIANS and the power pop sound of the MYSTERY ACTION sideproject that Evan had going for awhile. Check out "She's In, You're Gone" and the title track. (AW)  
(Dionysus/www.dionysusrecords.com)



**BOYLION**

*"Up Up, Down Down,  
Left Right, Left  
Right, B, A, Select,  
Start" CD* Some GET-UP KIDS wannabes who know their old

school Nintendo codes. Too bad most of the fans of this type of shit aren't old enough to have played

"Contra" on NES. (MC)  
(www.mocrecords.com)



**BOY SETS FIRE**  
*"Suckerpunch  
Training" CD*

Though considered gods of emo, this band deserve more credit (Ha! Yeah, I just dissed emo. Go cry). There is no teary-eyed shoegazing here. The boisterous singing may scare off some, but this album is as badass as anything in the hardcore crates. If you like rock in your core, pick this up. (STM)  
(Deathwish/www.deathwishinc.com)



**BREATHE IN**  
*"From This Day On" CD*

This sucks, Brett! Actually, it's fabulous. Is it possible for Bridge 9 to put out a bad record? These twelve jams are unrelenting. While comparable to their labelmates (AMERICAN NIGHTMARE, SHARK ATTACK), these boys also incorporate Cuckoo's Nest/Huntington Beach punk and good ol' rock n' roll. Awesome vocals. Inspiring music. A cut above the rest. (STM)  
(Bridge Nine/www.bridge9.com)



**THE BROUGHT LOW**  
*s/t CD*

Wankarific 70's buttrock stylings that give you nothing to hold on to. There are no hooks, no attitude, no danger, and hardly any soul, just lots of jammy, lengthy, bland rock. (MC)  
(Tee Pee/PO Box 20307/New York, NY 10009)



# REVIEWS

## **BUFF MEDWAYS** **"This Is This" CD**

BILLY CHILDISH's fairly new combo is a bit of a departure from his previous bands. They have a heavier rock sound with a lot of HENDRIX influence going on, especially on songs like "Cross Lines". And I hear some major WHO stuff going on as well. Different, but still really good. (AW)  
(Vinyl Japan/www.vinyljapan.com)

## **BUFF MEDWAYS** **"Fire/Manic Depression" 7"**

Here's some more full-on HENDRIX, as both songs are HENDRIX covers. "Fire" really wails, and the guitar solo is totally bonkers! "Manic Depression," one of my fave HENDRIX songs, gets a good workout as well. (AW)  
(Friends of the Buff Medway Fanciers Association/no address listed)



## **BURN** **"Cleanse" CD**

If you're like me, you've spent the last ten years relishing the one brilliant BURN

seven inch. Gloriously, they have returned. And unlike most "reunion" bands, BURN has delivered an unbelievably good record. Though it may owe more to ORANGE 9mm than the BURN of yesteryear, this album is ridiculously good. (STM)  
(Equal Vision/  
www.equalvision.com)

## **BURNOUTS** **"Close To Breakevil" CD**

These Danes start off rockin' nicely, but unfortunately start plodding like a bowlegged giant sloth with an anchor lodged in its bootyhole about halfway. along This is because the guitarist uses the wrong pick-up (the one near

the neck instead of the one closer to the bridge). There sure is some cool stuff going on here, but the guitar sound reminds me of that old TV commercial slogan: Where's the beef? (TS)  
(Bad Afro)



## **BURST** **"Conquest: Writhe" CD**

Fast, driving hardcore from Sweden. Sore throat vocals over soaring

music. Better than I assumed it would be. If INTEGRITY had a melodic cousin, it would be this band. (STM)  
(Prank/PO Box 419892/San Francisco, CA 94141)



## **CAESAR'S PALACE** **"Cherry Kicks" CD**

Punky pop with more than a little bit of electronic/techno tendencies. Make no mistake, this is

pretty "nightclub" sounding and all. I didn't vomit immediately, which means they might be doing something right. This could easily be all over the radio, which is an indication of how shitty things are. (MC)  
(Virgin Sweden/  
www.aliendogod.com)



## **CAPTAIN SENSIBLE** **"Smash It Up, Parts 1-4" 7" EP**

Another slice of DAMNED history. Until now the full original epic version

of this song had never been released, but now the world can bask in its glory. I still prefer the trimmed-down version, although the completest slant and the three extra tracks make this a must for DAMNED fans and punk archeologists alike. (JC)

(NDN/PO Box 131471/The Woodlands, TX 77393)



## **CAULFIELD** **"...Sleep Tight, Ya Morons" CD**

These guys don't love the RAMONES, they love SCREECHING

WEASEL. There is a difference. This is a pretty impressive tribute to "My Brain Hurts" If you dig that record, you'll groove on this. They have a good snotty attitude, with the tunes and harmonies to match. (RK)  
(Storm/www.stormrecords.com)

## **THE CAUSE** **"Human Condition" CD**

This is amazing, from the opening chanting screams of "I know I will break free" right into some of the heaviest riff-driven rock punk hardcore I've heard in a while. Imagine the guitar work of BLACK FLAG draped over HELMET's drumming with REFUSED-style vocals driving the whole damn ship. It's too bad there are only six songs. (BAM)  
(Ides Of March/via Revhq.com)



## **CHAMELEONS** **"Live At The Gallery Club, Manchester, 1982" CD**

A "vintage" live recording from this

UK New Wave/guitar pop outfit. Their sound is similar to many of the bands that were popular around this time and region, namely the CURE's early stuff. It's very listenable, and if you dig stuff like this you could do much worse. (MC)  
(Cherry Red/ www.cherryred.co.uk)



# SHITLIST

## CHAOTIC DISCHORD

### "Now That's what I Call A Fuckin' Racket/Live in New York" CD

This is great sloppy, pissed off, fuck-off-you-bloody-wanker rare UK punk from 1982. It's too bad I didn't get a cover or insert for this CD, just the disc itself.

Nonetheless these cunts were pretty silly and rude in their day, what with their funny trash-talking lyrics and messy style. 33 hilarious and offensive P.U.N.K numbers in all. (CLL)

(no label or address listed; get it at [www.interpunk.com](http://www.interpunk.com))

## CHARGERS STREET GANG

### "Holy The Bop Apocalypse" CD

Now this is something I can get into. C.S.G. manage to mingle the power of MC5 with

the drunken punk strut of the NEW BOMB TURKS. Tim Kerr's excellent production gives you the impression that total collapse is imminent, but they manage to hold everything together on a perfect raw and noisy level. The Midwest can be alright. (MC)  
(Get Hip/PO Box 666/Canonsburg, PA 15317)

## CHESTERFIELD KINGS

### "Yes I Understand" 7"

Wow, this is probably the best KINGS song I've heard in a long time. Not that their other recent stuff hasn't been good, but this is really terrific. It's taken from the low budget movie, "Where Is The Chesterfield King?", and the flipside features Sal Valentino of the BEAU BRUMMELS on vocals! (AW)

(Sundazed/Living Eye/PO Box 85/Coxsackie, NY 12051)

## CHICKENS

### "Prepare To Plug In" CD

Four fifths of these guys used to be U.I.C., a great Canadian garage punk band from the 1980s. The CHICKENS play similar guitar-heavy, amped-up '66- meets '77-style garage punk. Definitely one of my fave raves of late. (AW)  
([www.thechickens.com](http://www.thechickens.com))

## CHOSEN FEW

### "Really Gonna Punch You Out!!!" 2xLP

Obsessive fans of Australian punk will be salivating over this fantastic collection. The CHOSEN FEW were the real deal, rocking Australia in the late 70s and releasing one classic and much sought-after EP. This beautiful double LP collects that EP, an entire live set, and whole slew of unreleased goodies. A definitive collection and a must for fans of "Killed By Death" obscurities. (MC)  
(Hate/Circ.ne Gianicolense 112/00152 Rome/ITALY)

## CHROMOSOMES

### "More Time To Relax" CD

Before I put this on, I thought, "this looks like it sucks." When the album opened with slow surf guitar, I thought "what the hell is this?!" And then came the cheesy pop songs about surfing and hanging out with girls at the beach. You can guess what I thought next. (LD)  
([www.giadamusic.it](http://www.giadamusic.it))

## CIRCUS MAXIMUS

### s/t CD

One of the best overlooked records from 1967. CIRCUS MAXIMUS contained two great singer/songwriter/guitarists, Jerry Jeff Walker (yes, the well-known country singer) and Bob Bruno, and this LP is a mini-masterpiece that embodied their creative interaction. It's basically a folk rock record which contains lots of

chestnuts in that genre (such as "Lost Sea Shanty" and "People's Games"), but what makes it truly extraordinary are (Bruno's?) punky vocals and the unexpected fuzztone blasts on killer tracks like "The Rest of My Life to Go" and "Bright Light Lover". (JB)  
(Vanguard/1299 Ocean Avenue/Santa Monica, CA 90401)

## CLASH

### "White Men In Hammersmith Odeon" CD

This is basically a reissue of the great "16 Tracks" live boot, culled from a performance for the "Concerts For Kampuchea" back in 1979. The sound is fantastic and is actually even better than the LP boot, and it contains a great selection of "London Calling"-period songs. Featuring lots of energy and much better packaging than the original boot. (AW)  
(Tommy Gunn/no address)

## CLASH

### "Live '76" LP

These early live CLASH bootlegs have been coming out like crazy these days. Here's another one, pressed up as a snazzy lookin' picture disc. It's got a decentsound, and derives from another very early 1976 show from Barbarella's. Good. (AW)  
(no label or address listed)

## CLASS ASSASSINS

### "No Justice" 7" EP



Boring and generic street punk without much bite. Weak songs, weak record. (JC)  
(Insurgence/2 Bloor Street, W St 100

-184/Toronto, Ontario M4W 3E2/CANADA)



# REVIEWS

## CLEATUS

### "Snatching Defeat From The Jaws Of Victory" CD

Attempted: catchy pop-punk with sensitive lyrics. Reality: trite, boring pop with bad production and no feeling. Sorry boys, better luck next time. (LD)  
(Firefly/PO Box 30179/London, E17 5FE/ENGLAND)

## COOL PANIC

### "Made Of Stone" CD

Spanish punk/garage hybrid fronted by a chica who sings lines like "gimme a razor right now, gimme some action" with that thick trilled "r" Spanish accent that always makes the Slugman think "now, there's an ass I'd like to rock." So call me biased. The band plays credible covers of "Why Do I Cry" and "I Can Only Give You Everything" along with a number of originals with mixed results. (TS)  
(no label or address listed)

## CRAMPS

"Vengeance...More Powerful than a Vat of Boiling Acid" CD  
The return of the CRAMPS' original label, along with reissues of six of their classic records.  
"Rockinnreelininauklandnewzealandxxx", "Smell Of Female", "A Date With Elvis", "Stay Sick!", "Look Mom No Head" and "Big Beat From Badsville". This CD is a promo sampler of the six records, but what you need to do is march right down to your local record store and pick up all of these records from one of the best punk bands that ever lived. Limited editions of each are available on colored wax, and the CDs all have bonus tracks. (JC)  
(Vengeance/www.thecramps.com)

## CRIMSON GHOSTS

### "Instrumental Tribute to the Misfits" LP

Originally known as 13 GHOSTS,

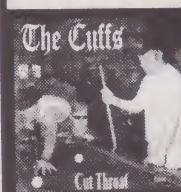
and apparently also alternately known as the PHANTOM CREEPS, these guys cover thirteen of your favorite MISFITS tunes, surf-style and with no vocals. Their versions of "Halloween", "Where Eagles Dare", "Attitude", and "Horror Business" come off quite well, with one of the guitars doing the vocal lines! A wacky idea, but like the RAMONETURES releases, it actually works. (AW)  
(John Kozik/PO Box 58/Boston, MA./02134)



## CRIPPLERS

### "One More For The Bad Guys" CD

Yee-haw! Drunk, fun country punk! They have a lot of energy, and I can't help but tap my foot to 'em. It says that all songs were recorded in one take, just like in a live show, complete with the covers. They'd work great alongside REVEREND HORTON HEAT. (LD)  
(Dionysus/PO Box 1975/Burbank, CA 91507)



## CUFFS

### "Cut Throat" 7" EP

I think that this band has been heavily influenced by RANCID and the DROPKICK MURPHYS. Not up to the usual high Headache street punk standard. (JC)  
(Headache/ POB 204, Midland Park, NJ 07432)



## CUTTHROATS 9

### "Anger Management" CD

This thing was quite a pleasant surprise. Not recommended for the sheep who want nothing more from the 'core than retread SLAYER riffs. Punk, Jazz, Blues. Did I hear a slide guitar in there? An intriguing ride for those with an open mind, and

featuring Chris Spencer of UNSANE. (STM)  
(Reptillian/www.reptillianrecords.com)

## CZOLGOSZ



## CZOLGOSZ

### "Liberation" CD

This is excellent. Every single song is about war and rich politicians. The vocals are very understandable with a bit of an M.D.C. political style, but with some undeniable humor that speaks the truth. Boston's CZLOGOSZ give us a very good history lesson, all dictated through fantastic fast-paced punk. (CLL)  
(Rodent Popsicle/PO Box 1143/Allston, MA 02134)



## DAMNED

### "Ignite" 7" EP

A live recording of the DAMNED taped in 1994 and 1995. We all know that they kinda started to blow, but thankfully the majority of the tunes showcased here come from their classic early period. If you're a big fan, check it out. If not, stick with their classic studio work. (MC)  
(NDN/PO Box 131471/The Woodlands, TX 77393)



## DAN MELCHIOR'S

### BROKE REVUE

### "Heavy Dirt" CD

A great, appropriately titled released by this BILLY CHILDISH co-conspirator. "Heavy Dirt" contains some good, dirty blues-punk that fits in well with the In The Red roster of bands. I wish they would've made it to Shakedown this year, as it would've been cool



# SHITLIST

to see live. (MC)  
(In The Red/118 W. Magnolia  
Blvd./PO Box #208/Burbank, CA  
91506)



## **DARKBUSTER vs. TOMMY & THE TERRORS** s/t CD

DARKBUSTER starts this split off with five songs of melodic street punk, but the only song I really liked was "Hammer". TOMMY & THE TERRORS won this punk rock match with no contest, due to their four songs of extreme singalong hardcore. (CLL)  
(Rodent Popsicle/PO Box 1143/Allston, MA 02134)

## **DEAD FALL** s/t CD

DEAD FALL is a new local Bay Area hardcore thrash punk band along the same lines as early AGGRESSION. The sound quality is a bit low, but you get a good dose of intense punk rock. (CLL)  
(deadfall\_hc@hotmail.com)

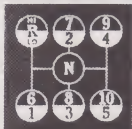


## **THE DEDICATION** "Youth Murder Anthems" CD

What's in the air in Boston? Yet another astounding Beantown band.

More mosh than your silly ass can handle. Think of the entire Bridge 9 catalog and you'll know what this sounds like. Great! (STM)  
(Deathwish/www.deathwishinc.com)

## **DEEP REDUCTION**



## **DEEP REDUCTION** "2" CD

An absolute must for RADIO BIRDMAN fans. This is the second full-

length by Deniz Tek's DEEP REDUCTION, and this time he makes the smartest move possible: getting BIRDMAN vocalist Rob Younger to rock it on every tune. The result is probably the best post-BIRDMAN recording I've heard by them. As close as any of us will get to that seminal band today, and it's damn good. (MC)  
(Get Hip/PO Box 666/Canonsburg, PA 15137)



## **DEFNICS**

### "Look At Me, Mom, I'm Not Dead 2001" 7"

Nearly 20 years after their only single was released,

Cleveland's Defnics managed to finally crank another one out. A band that fits in nicely with the city's classic punk groups, and this release also includes a live version of "51%", one of the tunes off their original single. Another classic Cleveland band brought back by Smog Veil. (MC)  
(Smog Veil/774 Mays Blvd #10-454/Incline Village, NV 89451)

## **DENNIS MOST & THE INSTIGATORS**

### "Excuse My Spunk" LP

Once forgotten punk rudeness given a second chance. "Excuse My Spunk" collects tunes written and performed by DENNIS MOST from 1976-1983 and, unlike some volumes in the Rave Up "Lost Punk Nuggets" series, this is all studio and virtually dud free. The title cut is hilarious and great, and the rest hold up as well. (MC)  
(Rave Up/Via Montecuccli 13/00176 Rome ITALY)

## **THE DEPARTURE** "A Necessity Of Ruins" CD

Fast, melodic hardcore along the lines of REACH THE

SKY, ENSIGN, and NINE LIVES. Good but not breathtaking. The songs start to sound the same after awhile. (STM)  
(www.thedeparture.com)

## **DEVOTCHKAS**

### "Live Fast...Die Young" CD

Well now, the DEVOTCHKAS have a new singer on this CD who sounds like a whiney VICE SQUAD clone. The music itself is good, but the vocals are annoying as hell. The old singer had a rougher punk voice, but this vocalist is a bit screechy for my ears. (CLL)  
(Punkcore/PO Box 916/Middle Island, NY 11953)



## **DIALTONES**

### "Playing The Beat On The Radio" 7" EP

Another stellar single from the DIALTONES. These

Swedes have the formula of the DEVIL DOGS down, as they use lots of swank guitar and macho cool, and this contains two originals and a version the FUN THINGS' much-covered "Savage". If you have yet to hear them, do so immediately. (MC)  
(Dead Beat/PO Box 283/ Los Angeles, CA 90078)



## **DICTATORS**

### "D.F.F.D." CD

The DICTATORS save rock'n'roll and NYC. The Big Apple's favorite sons are back, (much) older,

and rocking harder than ever. The hits include "Who Will Save Rock'N'Roll?" and "Pussy And Money", the new DICTATORS anthem. This album features many of the great tunes that they've been wowing live audiences with recently. One of the best bands ever, a fantastic record, just what I needed! (MC)



(Dictators MultiMedia/PO Box 220-330/ Brooklyn, NY 11222)



#### **DILS**

##### **"Dils Dils Dils" CD**

The second Dionysus DILS release in recent months features the six great studio tracks that appeared on two of their three early singles, and a bunch of live stuff. Not being a fan of live records, I much prefer the former cuts, among which is a terrific 1977 demo called "Blow Up". It's always a pleasure to hear these tuneful early punk and cowpunk classics from California's original "red.rockers". (JB) (Dionysus/PO Box 1975/Burbank, CA 91507)



#### **DIRT BIKE**

##### **ANNIE/KUNG FU MONKEYS**

##### **"The Wedding" split 7" EP**

This EP contains nice melodic tunes from both bands. Thoughtful and restrained, both groups have better than average songwriters and manage to play some charming and memorable pop music. (JC) (Whoa Oh/52 McLoughlin Street/Glen Cove, NY 115542)

#### **DISTILLERS**

##### **"Sing Sing Death House" CD**

An amazing record that's very reminiscent of RANCID's more anthemic material, but with Brody's growly Courtney Love meets Axl Rose vocals. There are lots of great changes, dead on drumming (supplied by Andy Outbreak of NERVE AGENTS), and great big guitar tones galore. Don't hold it against them because AP named them as one of the top bands that you should know about. (BAM) (Hellcat/2798 Sunset Blvd/Los

Angeles, CA 90026)

#### **DISTILLERS**

##### **"Sing Sing Death House" CD**

Excellent driving punk – think RANCID's first two albums with throaty female vocals. It came in a stupid promo sleeve that doesn't say anything other than who to contact for retail sales, marketing, publicity, or radio. Who knows, maybe it comes with the greatest packaging ever conceived for the humble CD? (RK) (Hellcat/do not duplicate fucker)

#### **D.F.A**

##### **"Drunk Fucking Assholes" CD**

"Drink some beer, get in a fight." That's right, beer-fueled punk rock mayhem is what you get here. They're fast, drunk, young, and don't give a fuck. All the songs are about guzzling beer, starting shit, and being a "Drunk Fucking Asshole!" (CLL) (no label or address listed)

#### **DISTASTER STRIKES**

##### **s/t CD**



anger and aggression you've built up toward the fucked-up system and the government that runs it. This is almost as powerful and hard as a bomb exploding in Afghanistan or wherever else DISTASTER STRIKES. (CLL) (Rodent Popsicle/PO Box 1143/Allston, MA 02134)

#### **DISCIPLINE**

##### **"Love Thy Neighbor" CD**

DISCIPLINE hail from Holland and rip it up with an excellent breed of streetpunk. For the most part, the music is hard rock'n'roll,

## **REVIEWS**

sometimes fast, sometimes just rocking with very rough- and tough-sounding vocals. They compare with the likes of LIMECELL, and if you don't agree, "Fuck You Anyway!" (CLL) (Too Damn Hype/PO Box 15793/Philadelphia, PA 19103)



#### **DOGS**

##### **"Class of 1970" 7"**

What, a new DOGS single? They sound just as good as they did in the '70s, so if you liked their retrospective Dionysus CD you should run out and get this. The B-side is a lo-fi live song recorded in 1971! (AW) (Dionysus/www.dionysusrecords.com)

#### **DOGS**

##### **"Class of 1970/Rebel Rock" 7"**

This year's DOGS reissues by Dionysus have led to a literal rebirth, as "Class Of 1970" is the band's first new recording in a really long time. It's no "Slash Your Face", but it's still pretty great. The flip is a barely audible live recording from 1971, but it's still recognizably the DOGS. (MC) (Dionysus/PO Box 1975/Burbank, CA 91507)



#### **DOGWOOD**

##### **"Matt Aragon" CD**

DOGS HIT, or perhaps FUCKING DOGS BOLLOCKS, would be a more appropriate name for this embarrassment. They thank God for inventing rock'n'roll, which I thought was the Devil's music, and then proceed to produce the blandest, most pathetic, half-assed attempt to copy NOFX I've ever had the misfortune to suffer



# SHITLIST

through. (RK)  
(Tooth And Nail)

## DORKS s/t CD

I can usually tell right away whether or not I'm going to like something. And even though I'm in a San Francisco post-burrito stupor, my head started bobbing immediately when I put this CD on. Catchy pop-punk with country rock roots. And I don't think they're dorks. (LD)  
(Man With A Gun/PO Box 15327/Boston, MA 02215)



## DOWNWAY "Defeat Songs" CD

The fourth full-length from these Canadians.  
Produced by Russ Rankin of GOOD

RIDDANCE, which is as good a pointer as any to their melodic hardcore stylings. They have a lot more in common with the SoCal sound than the DOUGHBOYS/NILS, unfortunately. (RK)  
(Sessions/www.sessionsrecords.com)



## DRAGONS "Rock'N'Roll Kamikaze" CD

Move over, Sheila E...your brother's gotta rock! All punk'n'rollers dig

the DRAGONS: they're loud and play THUNDERS-inspired punk the way it's supposed to be played. This album just might be their best so far, so grab this disc, a Jack & Coke, and smirk the night away. (MC)

(Junk/576 N. Bellflower #338/Long Beach, CA 90814)



## DREXEL "Whatever Whatever" CD EP

Some harmony vocals and twin guitar can't save these six tracks of utterly immemorable melodic pop-punk. It's not bad, just bland. (RK)  
(www.forkinhand.com)



## THE DRIPPING LIPS "Such A Lot Of Stars" 7" EP

Oh, how the mighty have fallen. One-time DAMNED and NEW LORDS axeman

Brian James' current project just ain't good. The title track is punchless pop, and though the remaining tunes are a little better, the rock is long gone. I can't say I'm surprised. (MC)  
(NDN/PO Box 131471/The Woodlands, TX 77393)

## DROOGS

### "Where The Bottles Fly" CDR

A live, semi-authorized "bootleg" CD from one of L.A.'s longest-running garage bands. This was recorded in 1997 at the Roskilde Festival in Denmark, and features a selection of tunes from their last studio LP, "Atomic Garage", plus some old faves like "Call of Your Dogs", "He's Waitin'", and "I'm Not Like Everybody Else". Excellent. (AW)  
(Fairies Records/no address)



## DROPSICK INJEKTORS s/t CD

At first glance I thought this band was called the DROPKICK

INKJETERS, so I thought they'd be total geeks. In addition to their name being somewhat of a rip-off, guess what! So is their sound! Ho-hum drunk punk falling way short

of the PIST, etc. (LD)  
(dropsick@hotmail.com)



## ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN "Buzz of 1,000 Volts" CD

This might just be the first E.F. CD that hasn't knocked me

on my ass on the very first play. That's not to say it isn't good, just that it's taken me repeated listenings to fully appreciate the diversity of sounds. There's more of a hard rock approach here, and even some blues creep in, while the level of production remains pretty high. (AW)  
(Victory/www.victoryrecords.com)

## ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN "Sick As A Dog" 7"

Part of Telegraph Records single club, this is only available by subscription. There's a good rockin' A-side, but the real meat is their cover of X's "Sex And Dying In High Society" on the flip. Don't know who the uncredited female singer is, but she's good. (AW)  
(Telegraph, no address listed)

## ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN "The Buzz Of 1000 Volts!" CD

I was worried about these guys when I stopped seeing ten new albums appear weekly. It looks like they took a much needed rest to work on this new album, though it's still the same classic EF with monster guitars and strong-as-hell vocals. It may not convert you to their side, but die-hards with still dig 'em. (MC)  
(Victory/346 N. Justine Street, Suite 504/Chicago, IL 60607)

## ELECTRIC PRUNES "Artifact" CD

It's hard to believe that there is a new PRUNES CD featuring four of the original five members. Songs



# REVIEWS

(www.greenrecords.net)

## FLESHIES/VICTIMS FAMILY

### split 7"

Old weirdo revolutionaries vs. young weirdo revolutionaries.



VICTIMS FAMILY have never done much for me, and they continue that trend with their tune here. The FLESHIES, however, just flat out rock with "Gonna Have To Pass", a tune that's as great as any on their recently released album. Worth it for latter alone. (MC)

(Alternative Tentacles/PO Box 419092/ San Francisco, CA 94141)

## FLAMIN' SIDEBURNS

### "Hallelujah Rocknrollah" CD

Reputedly one of the best live Euro bands ever, this group from Finland (via Argentina) delivers an enjoyable, almost STONES-y record chockablock fulla finger-lickin' rock'n'roll goodness. There are catchy melodies, some killer hooks, and enough proficient playing to make for some real corkers (such as "Up In Flames" or the stompin' "World Domination"). A good effort, to be sure, but I'd like to hear 'em crank up the whomp-levels a notch or two. (TS) (Bad Afro)

## FLAMING STARS

### "Gin Mill Perfume: The Story So Far" CD

Europe's FLAMING STARS have put out six albums and a ton of singles in the last few years, and the singer even has a book coming out. This CD is their first stateside release and is a compilation of tracks from the others. Very cool stuff that reminds me of a 60's rave-up version of NICK CAVE. Heavy on the dramatic, almost spy

like "Lost Dreams", "The Dream I Had Last Night", and a slowed-down cover of "7 & 7 Is" harken back to their patented '60s acid-punk sound, but others showcase more of an ambient sound with a lot of "extended jamming" and aren't as compelling. Not bad, but a little scattered stylistically speaking. (AW) (Prunetwang/www.electricprunes.com)



although this isn't my favorite release of theirs. There are lots of good tracks, some of which remind me of the TEEN IDOLS, but some of them don't stick with you. There must be the Ben Weasel connection somewhere. Worth picking up. (JC) (Lookout/3264 Adeline Street/Berkeley, CA 94703)

## ENSIGN/REACHING FORWARD

### "Existence Is Fading" 7"

ENSIGN come on with full effect here with more of the

classic old school hardcore that has made them famous. Fans of early JUDGE or the CRO-MAGS probably already worship this band. This record also contains two more great tracks from REACHING FORWARD as they prepare the US for their upcoming full-length on Bridge 9 Records. (BAM) (Reflections/reflectionsrecords.com)



## EPOXIES

### "Need More Time" 7" EP

Awesome punk-influenced New Wave with female vocals. A totally

great synth/keyboards and monster hooks give this a legitimate New Wave feel, and it contains two originals and a perrrrrrfect cover of ADAM ANT's "Beat My Guest". After the BRIEFS, could this be Dirtnap's next incredible combo? (MC) (Dirtnap/PO Box 21249/Seattle, WA 98111)



## EYELINERS

### "Sealed with a Kiss" CD

A very cool all-girl pop punk trio that I have admired for years,

## FADED GREY

### "A Quiet Time Of Desperation" CD

Old school hardcore for a new school world with fast, pissed, and punk rock overtones like crazy. Pick this record up and see 'em live, since they're an amazing live band. (BAM) (PO Box 30261/Las Vegas, NV 89173)

## FELCHERS

### "Taste the Star" CD

Not to be confused with the Canadians or Australians going by the same moniker, Amsterdam's FELCHERS are a NITWITZ/FUNERAL ORATION offshoot who castrate the competition with a never ending barrage of fast riffage, mind-numbing profanity, and wailing leads. Tunes like "Kama Sutra Kamikaze", "Devil Transport", and "B-52" (with its irresistible "Bomb the Baldwins!" chorus) prove that the FELCHERS waste no time with the sort of politically correct nonsense that neutered 95% of the p-rock industry. This rocks serious ass. (TS) (no label or address listed)

## FINE BEFORE YOU CAME

### "Cultivation Of Ease" CD

The Italians do emo. Flawlessly played and produced. A really annoying whiny singer. At best, it sounds a lot like early GAMEFACE. At worst, it just meanders and goes nowhere. (RK)



# SHITLIST

movie soundtrack arrangements on some tracks. (JC)

(Alternative Tentacles/PO Box 419092/San Francisco, CA 94141)



**THE FOUR CORNERS**  
**"Say You're A Scream" CD**

Really cool 60's-style garage punk with female vocals.

When they let loose, they bring the MOONEY SUZUKI to mind. The CD includes both a stereo AND a mono version of every tune. What a great fucking idea! The mono sounds a lot better, as it gets that garage feel down. (MC)

(Kindercore/ www.kindercore.com)

**Fracas**



**FRACAS**  
**"A New Host of Torment" CD**

As I write this review, the mighty Joe Franke, singer of FRACAS, is

healing up after breaking his femur bone at the band's most recent show. He broke it when he fell from the club's ceiling, from which he was hanging while singing.

FRACAS put on a hell of a show, and this is a great horror-influenced hardcore CD. (JC)

(Calendar of Death/1431 A Park Street/Alameda, CA 94501)

**FUGAZI**

**"Furniture" CD EP**

Forget hardcore, or polka, or whatever you wanna call them...FUGAZI is a great rock'n'roll band. Sadly, it seems that many have apparently forgotten this. If you fall into this camp, I'd like to point you in the direction of this record. The fact is that this EP is fantastic, as are all of their other records, so don't

count them out. (MC)

(Dischord/3819 Beecher Street NW/Washington D.C. 20007)



**FUGAZI**  
**"The Argument" CD**

A new FUGAZI record, and a bit of a return to form, or at least aural accessibility. There's

a lot more of their patented driving rhythms on this one, coupled with a scratchy, early GANG OF FOUR feel. And thankfully, a lot less of their aimless musical meanderings. This might be the first FUGAZI record I actually keep. (RK)

(Dischord/www.dischord.com)



**GAMITS**  
**"A Small Price To Pay" CDEP**

1. The GAMITS play a fierce blend of power pop and punk. 2. They have put out a

few darn good releases so far. 3. This ranks among the best of them. 4. Vocally they sound a bit like GREEN DAY at times, but I don't think it's intentional. (JC)

(Suburban Home/PO Box 40757/Denver, CO 80204)



**GARRISON/HUNDRED REASONS**  
**"New Habits For Old Friends" split CD EP**

Two tracks from each band. Utterly bland, unmemorable emo/

backpack/ shoegazer dross. I'm sure these bands have powerfully affected hundreds. I, however, remain untouched. (RK)

(Simba/2104 E Florida Street/Long Beach, CA 90814)

**GARRISON**

**"Be A Criminal" CD**

Pure indie rock, no way around it. I



can't even give it the credibility-earning tag of emo. It's not even my thing, but it rocks. Think of SHIFT or JAWBOX or all those

records Rev put out in the '90s.

(STM)

(Revelation/www.revelationrecords.com)



**GAVIN BLACK**  
**"7th Generation Rock N' Roll" CD**

Sweet Jesus! Pure, unbridled chaos. COALESCE, BIRD OF ILL OMEN, BOTCH.

This record will leave you beaten and bloodied like an emo kid at a SLAYER show. Brilliant. Get it. They even do a FAITH NO MORE cover. (STM)

(Friction/www.frictiongoods.com)

**GEIN & THE GRAVEROBBERS**  
**"Hand 10 With" CD**

Excellent intro "horror surf" music. Recorded live on a 4-track, with hilarious horror flic soundbites between songs, these ghouls crank out cool tunes like "Graveyard Mind", "Spectre Stomp", and "Hot Rod Horror". (AW)

(Necro-tone/www.Geinandthegraveroobers.com)

**GIZMOS**

**"1976: The Rockabilly Yobs Session" LP**

I had never been much exposed to the magic of the GIZMOS. I am well aware of their legendary status, but I always figured that it was more for breaking ground with a punk attitude and not for their actual tunes. This compilation is full of plenty of (at times hilarious) attitude. The recording quality is all right, though it mostly sounds like a fully drunken band practice. (JC)



(Hate/Circ.ne Gianicolense  
112/00152 Roma/ITALY)

#### GLORYHOLES



#### **"Screamer/This Is All There Is" 7"**

Pretty good Rip Off label-style punk from Seattle. The two tunes on this disc are simple,

loud, and sound almost exactly the same. Could be a formula for success! Featuring former members of the SINISTER SIX. (MC)  
(Dirtnap/PO Box 21249/Seattle, WA 98111)



#### **GODDAMN GENTLEMEN**

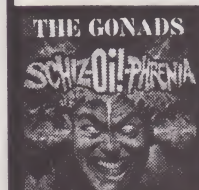
#### **"Sexcalibre Horsepower" CD**

Man, this is great stuff. A five-piece punk-soul band, occasionally augmented by some great sax and harp work. It's kinda like the BELL RAYS, but with more of a Northwest 60's influence and a guy singer. (AW)  
(Uppercut/www.uppercutrecords.com)

#### **GODDAMN GENTLEMEN**

#### **"Sex-Caliber Horsepower" CD**

The band name and album title had me worried, but it wasn't enough to ruin the cool, organ-heavy goodies on this disc. The presence of the wall-to-wall organ might turn off some, but this comes off as much more punk than garage. I could do without the random countrified moments, though. (MC)  
(Uppercut/4470 Sunset Blvd. #195/Los Angeles, CA 90027)



#### **GONADS**

#### **"Schiz-Oi-Phrenia" CD**

In some ways, it's a

shame that Garry Bushell is a moronic, bigoted xenophobe. The music here, while utterly formulaic, is a pretty good rendition of what is called "street-punk." The lyrics are, by and large, laughable. Sad and pathetic. (RK)  
(Captain Oi/www.captainoi.com)

#### **GREAT ANTI LISTEN/DAY OF LESS** **"A Snapshot In Time" split CD EP**

This release is huge. The GREAT ANTI LISTEN feature big D-tuned guitars and Aaron Edge, a fixture in the hardcore community for over twelve years whose past projects include HIMSA, GENUINE, HARKONEN, and CHRIST, screaming and singing. DAY OF LESS also offers gut-wrenching songs that are pissed-off and pretty at the same time. Both bands seem influenced by GRADE, THURSDAY, QUICKSAND, or HUM.  
(Rise/PO Box 135/Roseburg, OR 97470)



#### **GRENADES**

#### **"Billiard Cue Blackout EP" 7" EP**

The GRENADES play good driving Boston punk rock that's not afraid to be a little

experimental. The lyrics and vocals could use a little work, but the band has potential. (JC)  
(Red Light/Back Bay Annex, PO Box 597/Boston, MA 02117)



#### **HALF EMPTIES**

#### **"Full Bore" CD**

This CD is packed with high-octane, engine-fueled melodic punk rock. Drop and fucking

roll, motherfuckers! La-la-la-whoa-whoa-ha-ha-ha! (CLL)  
(Out Of Step/PO Box 509/Vineburg, CA 95487)

## REVIEWS

#### **HARD FEELINGS**

#### **"Are Having A...Soul Party!" 7"**

Schooly and Co. finally return after their fantastic debut LP. On this 7", we're treated to some rockin' rave-ups of two soul classics, SOLOMON BURKE'S "Home In Your Heart" (also beautifully done by the DETROIT COBRAS this year) and NATHANIAL MAYER'S "Leave Me Alone". If it looks perfect and sounds perfect, shit...it must be perfect. (MC)  
(Gearhead/PO Box 421219/San Francisco, CA 94142)



#### **HAYMARKET RIOT** **"Bloodshot Eyes" CD**

I hear a definite FUGAZI influence in both this band's rhythms and

vocals. They keep it current by adding fresh emo-core urgency. This is an outfit that knows their sound. Recommended. (LD)  
(www.thickrecords.com)

#### **HELLRIDE**

#### **"Go Down" CD EP**

Here are six fast, metallic aggro punk blasts with a complete disregard for any political correctness in the naughty "get down and suck my cock, bitch" lyrical department. Girls, if you really want to know what's going on inside our heads, THIS IS IT! These Norwegians certainly weren't kidding around with the guitar sound, which smokes the willy-dilly turtle shit out of 96.7 % of today's tough guy streetpunk/Oi bands. (TS)  
(White Jazz)

#### **HELLSTOMPER**

#### **"Haulin' Ass" CD**

Are you a truck driver? If so, this is for you. I've never been a fan of



# SHITLIST



this Southern rock-inspired punk stuff, though Hellstomper appears to be one of the faves in that genre. That's fine

and dandy, but BLACK OAK ARKANSAS and GREGG ALLMAN covers will never...NEVER...get me going. (MC)  
(Steel Cage/PO Box 29247/Philadelphia, PA 19125)



## HIGH & THE MIGHTY s/t CD

Even though this is a CDR demo, the sound quality's not bad. The music is kinda basic, though. It's like one foot on the monitor and rip a fat solo dude-rock. (LD)  
(4324 NE 47th Ave/Portland, OR 97218)



## HIMSA "Death Is Infinite" CD

Big, nasty, chaotic noisecore, as technical as it is frantic. Perhaps the darkest album this year. CONVERGE, BOTCH, DEP. This album puts most metalcore bands to shame. (STM)  
(Revelation/www.revelationrecords.com)



## HIVES "Barely Legal" CD

Fresh off their first American tour, the HIVES' debut album is finally given a stateside release. Most fans are familiar with their most recent material, and I'm pleased to report that this is great

as well. Packed with energy, style, and rock. (MC)  
(Gearhead/PO Box 421219/San Francisco, CA 94142)



## LOS HUEVOS s/t 7"

Blazing, nasty punk rock that took me back to those old Thrasher skate rock tapes from the 1980's. Yeah, skate rock is a fitting description. Nasty punk rock that isn't too snotty, evil, or political. Can I make a GERMS comparison? (STM)  
(Dragnet/3519 SW Elmgrove Street/Seattle, WA 98126)



## HUMANOIDS "Gamma Ray Rock/Dirty Moves" 7"

Pretty disappointing stuff, especially since Jeff Bale enjoyed their live show. Not nearly as cool as it looks. I was hoping for some good old sci-fi punk rock, but instead I found something closer to pedestrian bar band rock. (JC)  
(no label or address listed)



## IGGY & THE STOOGES "Wild Love" CD

Yet another installment in Bomp's "Iguana Chronicles" series. This installment, for the most part, is a hit. The selections here are taken from practice tapes, usually lengthy jams. It's edited well, has informative liners, and the sound is actually decent. Of the 13 selections, 7 appear here for the first time. All STOOGES fanatics will lick it up. (MC)  
(Bomp/PO Box 7112/Burbank, CA 91510)



## IN CONTROL "Another Year" CD

The youthful exuberance just gushes from this thing. Energetic, hyper-kinetic hardcore that's not unlike early NYHC. Moshy. These boys do the 'Nard scene proud. (STM)  
(Indecision/www.indecisionrecords.com)

## INJECTIONS "Prison Walls" LP

An entire LP's worth of great California 70's punk. The Injections were from San Diego, ca. 1979, and released the "Killed By Death" classic "Prison Walls" single. This LP includes that high-priced single as well as a full, unreleased album. The single tracks are great, whereas the unreleased stuff sounds like an inept version of the CLASH. I dug it. (MC)  
(Rave Up/Via Montecucchi 13/00176 Rome/ITALY)

## MARK INSLEY "Tucson" CD

This is just straight country-rock. "She's acting single, I'm drinkin' doubles". You get the drift. I think this could be an effective soundtrack for the next Patrick Swayze film. Hopefully it'll be a road movie! (MC)  
(Rustic/ www.rusticrecords.com)



## (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY "A New Morning, Changing Weather" CD

The (International) Noise Conspiracy find themselves in the rare position of being able to please the sensitive sweater crowd, hardcore kids, garage rockers, and Epifat folks simultaneously. With good reason, too, as they are certainly capable of rocking with the best of



# REVIEWS

them while maintaining an intellectual, political, and artistic edge. I'm not sure if I like this record as much as their previous efforts, but I dig it all the same. (MC)  
(Burning Heart/2798 Sunset Blvd./ Los Angeles, CA 90026)



**(INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY**  
*"The First Conspiracy" CD*  
A collections of these Swedes' first 7"s, neatly

packaged here for easy consumer access. A lot rougher, rawer, and with more of a garage feel than their more recent keyboard-infused offerings. Nevertheless, the first rumblings of the revolution sound pretty damn good. (RK)  
(G-7 Welcoming Committee, distributed via Hopeless)

**(INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY**  
*"Capitalism Stole My Virginity" CD EP*

The single from their new full length, with a couple of unreleased tracks, which is presumably why you'll want to grab this. Actually, with a song title as good as "United By Haircuts", everyone ought to get this. The I.N.C. are truly hip, but actually rather good despite that. Revoution never sounded so cool. Some nice horns and keyboards really fill out the sound. (RK)  
(G-7 Welcoming Committee/g7welcomingcommittee.com)



**JACK PALANCE BAND**  
*"Get This Shit Underway" CD*  
The J.P.D. conjure up the scratchy production and driving melodies of WIRE's first LP,

and mix it up with the best of today's pop punk. Combined with a healthy anti-authoritarian "fuck-you" attitude, this is definitely a class act. (RK)  
(ADD/PO box 8240/Tampa, FL 33674)

**JEDI FIVE**  
*"Relentless" CD*

These Denver boys have got it down – the current Gainesville, Florida emo-core sound. With a bloody tear in their eye, they cut these twelve songs out of their open hearts. Not to make fun, this is actually really good. It just makes me smile a little bit that one of their songs is called "Emo Makes Me Cry." (LD)  
(Hell Bent/PO Box 1529/Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742)

**JELLYROLL ROCKHEADS**  
*"Kill Trend Thrash Demo 1999" 7" EP*

Absolutlely fucking amazing hardcore/thrash from Japan. Everything I've heard by this band is fantastic. Hardcore with more than enough punk feel to please even the most jaded rocker. One of the best HC outfits in the world. (MC)  
(Youth Attack!/PO Box 126321/San Diego, CA 92122)



**JERKY TURKEY/STEVE McQUEENS**  
*split 7" EP*  
France vs. Germany. The STEVE McQUEENS continue to rip off

SUPERCHARGER and offering up some decent garage punk, including a LOLI & THE CHONES cover. JERKY TURKEY were a little more impressive, being poppy with a definite BUZZCOCKS feel. (MC)  
(Lollipop/  
[www.chez.com/lollipoprecords](http://www.chez.com/lollipoprecords))



**JESUSEATER**  
*s/t CD EP*  
Heavy, heavy rock. HELMET, ROLLINS BAND, maybe even some FARENHEIT 451. They use their guitar for more than downtuned triples. Fronted by SWIZ throat Shawn Brown, but far more rock-oriented than SWIZ. Recommended for elderly hardcore kids who grew up on rock radio. Masterful songwriting. (STM)  
([www.jesuseater.com](http://www.jesuseater.com))



**JET BLACK JOY**  
*S/t CD*  
Once upon a time, the singer from this band saw BLACK SABBATH in concert and thought, "I can do that!" The only problem is that he could never shake his ALICE IN CHAINS/STONE TEMPLE PILOTS butt rock tendencies. (LD)  
([www.jetblackjoy.com](http://www.jetblackjoy.com))

**JOE JITSU**  
*"Lonely Teen's Club" CD*  
It's clear that these guys love GREEN DAY, but it still comes off okay. Short staccato lyrics, skate rock drums, and a crunchy guitar. I'd say these three lonely Texans are on the right track with this debut. Although it's a CDR, the recording is very good. (LD)  
(Brucemonkey/PO Box 2793/Salem, OR 97308)

**K THROUGH 6**  
*"What Once Was.." CD EP*  
This Seattle band has a bright future. Their debut CD rocks and has a slick production, and is also super catchy and melodic. The band's obvious influences include SAVES THE DAY and the GET UP KIDS. Worth checking out.



# SHITLIST

(Rise/PO Box 135/Roseburg, OR 97470)

## KARP



### KARP "Action Chemistry" CD

I've been intrigued by this Olympian band for a while.

Their newest is a

collection of tracks from old singles and comps recorded over the last few years. They combine thrash, emo, and slow pretty music, proving that they can do whatever they want. And though the recordings are chaotic, there's a great flow that turns this collection into a real album. (LD) (Punk In My Vitamins/PO Box 2283/Olympia, WA 98507)



### KNUCKLEDUST "Time Won't Heal This" CD

England's heaviest, MADBALL meets SLAYER. Heavy as guilt with

thoughtful lyrics. Thorp certainly knows how to pick them when it comes to crushing hardcore. The tank on the cover is a most appropriate image to represent this devastating album. (STM) (Thorp/www.thorprecords.com)

## LAYMEN TERMS

### "An Introduction" CD EP

Their little bio thing compares 'em to the likes of JIMMY EAT WORLD, ALKALINE TRIO, and SAMIAM. Well-polished stuff for sure. And those bands are pretty good references. Seven tracks which skip along quite nicely. (RK) (Soda Jerk/www.sodajerkrecords.com)



## LIARS ACADEMY "No News Is Good News" CD

Ah, the sublime beauty of anguished melodrama.

Laidback guitars and

understated vocals carry this rather fine slice of emo/college rock/indiepop/ whatever you call it these days. Regardless, this is ahead of that pack by miles. A winner. (RK)

## LIMP WRIST

### s/t LP

This is the one of the (few) bands that got me excited about hardcore again. LIMP WRIST play early Dischord-style hardcore, but what sets them apart is that, to my knowledge, they are the first old-school straight edge gay HC band. Screamed vocals about cute HC boys, homophobia, and Dr. Laura. This is exactly what hardcore is supposed to be: loud, fast, passionate and fun. (MC) (Lengu Armada c/o Martin/1010 1/2 Riverine Avenue/Santa Ana, CA 92701)



## LINE

### "Monsters We Breed" CD

This is a shockingly bad record. The LINE can't decide what, or who, they're trying

to emulate, and end up sounding utterly blah. I can't think of anything positive to say about this record, except maybe that they try. It has to be said that no one likes failure, however. (RK)

(Volcom

Entertainment/www.theline1.com)

## LISA CHRIST SUPERSTAR

### s/t CD EP

Decent punk'n'roll. Lisa Christ is the vocalist/guitarist, and she's got plenty of attitude and a fast, loud-ass guitar. All the right

ingredients are there, we'll see what they do next. (MC) (www.lisachristsuperstar.com)



## THE LOCUST

### "Flight Of The Wounded Locust" CD

The LOCUST sound like nothing I've ever heard, which is

the point. They're damaged, brutal and funny. I actually like it quite a bit, as I do all the weirdo San Diego No Wave garbage. If you've been avoiding these guys, bite the bullet and give 'em a shot. (MC) (Gold Standard Laboratories/PO Box 178262/San Diego, CA 92177)

## LONGSHOT

### "One Small Voice" CD EP

Another Oregon band playing really tight, melodic punk/emo. I got a LEATHERFACE/JAWBREAKER feel when I listened to this for the first time, as it's really catchy stuff. LONGSHOT features former members of the DRAPES. (Rise/PO Box 135/Roseburg, OR 97470)

## LOWER FORTY EIGHT

### "Gentle Tyranny" CD

This was a surprise. The shabby cover art did not prepare me for such an inventive CD from this San Francisco band. Sometimes it sounds like the post-rock New Wave that's so popular here. At other times, usually during the singing, the songs jump into really cool emo-core. The songs are beautifully crafted without overdoing it. (LD) (www.kingofsticks.com)

## LOVE

### s/t CD

A fantastic remastered CD reissue of the first LOVE LP, one of the all-time classics, has been a long time coming. Thus far only available as



an import, this features both the mono and stereo mixes of the LP, plus "Number 14" and an alternate take of "Signed D.C." The sound is fabulous and the liner notes are cool. (AW)  
(Elektra)

#### **LUCY LOVES SCHROEDER**

##### **"Lucy Is A Band" CD**

Thirteen blasts of bitter/sweet pop punk, with enough bite to make sure the sugary vocals don't veer into sickly goo. The MUFFS are an obvious comparison, perhaps crossed with those other pioneers of catchy punked-out pop, the FASTBACKS. Yup, they're that good. Actually, much better. (RK)  
(Vile Beat/www.beatville.com)

#### **MAGGOTS** **CD**

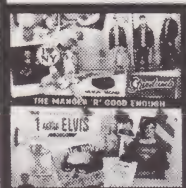
There's an obvious maggotty theme going on here (although "Maggot Man" is not a cover of the LOVESLUG tune), so am I supposed to call this Maggot Rock? This Swedish garagey/sixties/punk band consists of remnants from the CRIMSON SHADOWS (and the STOMACH MOUTHS, I believe) and delivers the goods nicely. (TS)  
(Bad Afro)



#### **MAGNETIC IV** **"Teenage Zombie Riot" CD**

Pretty standard issue horror-influenced, surfy-guitar garage punk.

There's a solid female vocalist who has some fun with it and some good playing by the band, but not much to tear it apart from the crowd. I bet they would be a blast live, though. (JC)  
(Reform School/945  
Columbia/Houston, TX 77008)



#### **MANGES** **"Manges 'R' Good Enough" CD**

This is a fucking amazing record. While obviously another set of

Europeans paying homage to the RAMONES, these guys situate their worship around the "Too Tough To Die" period rather than "Rocket To Russia"; with the attendant production volumes, layered instrumentation, and expanded songwriting. This is head and shoulders above the pack. The only band that even comes close is the TRAVOLTAS. (RK)  
(Stardumb/www.stardumbrecords.com)

#### **MARY TYLER MORPHINE/** **MUNITION** **split CD**

This CD benefits the Chicago coalition for the homeless. M.T.M. is a pop punk trio with powerful female vocals that waver between the GO-GOS and the RED AUNTS. MUNITION is a punk band with an obvious LEATHERFACE influence. All in all, a pretty good split. (LD)  
(www.failedexperiment.com)

#### **McSHRED** **"Absence Of Sanity" CD**

Boy, was I pleased to see this available again. Remember how fucking good the BAD BRAINS were on their first LP, and before? Well, McSHRED were giving them a run for their money in the early 80s. Whiplash hardcore, some truly heavy dub reggae, and incredible guitar work make this reissue about fucking time. Let's hope they don't remain Philly's best kept secret. (RK)  
(Uprising/PO box 42259/  
Philadelphia, PA 19104)

## **REVIEWS**

#### **M.D.C.**

##### **"Millions of Dead Cops, Now More Than Ever" CD**

This is basically a best of M.D.C., 1980-2000. It all goes in order from the beginning, so you get classic material from "Millions of Dead Cops", Multi-Death Corporation", "Millions of Dead Children", "Millions of Damn Christians", and all the rest. It even includes one SUBMISSIVES song. 30 tracks in all, which makes for an excellent collection of "Dead Cops". (CLL)  
(MDC/PO Box 142/Glen Cove, NY 11542)



#### **MEDEA** **CONNECTION** **"The Bell Ringer" CD**

This is a truly bizarre record (not to mention an interminably long one). Thirteen tracks of histrionic, heavy rock, and I don't mean rock in a positive sense. I can't imagine anyone reading this mag being remotely interested in this. (RK)  
(Attica Mythic  
Recordings/www.medeaconnection.com)



#### **MICKY & THE** **SALTY SEA DOGS** **"Fresh Fish" 7" EP**

Former MILKSHAKE Micky Hampshire teams up with some former

DAGGERMEN to bang out tunes that sound exactly like their previous efforts. Fans, like me, will see this as a good thing. All Chidish/Hamshire fanatics should act fast on this limited release. (MC)  
(Smart Guy/3288 21st Street, PMB #32/San Francisco, CA 94110)



# SHITLIST



## MID CARSON JULY "Wessel" CD

This is great! Eleven tracks of raging, pissed, snotty punk. They manage to merge that

aggressive DILLINGER 4 vibe with the drive of old British political punk (ICONS OF FILTH spring to mind) and a modern pop punk sensibility. Twin guitars and sore throats that can hold a glorious tune really propel this to the right places. (RK)

(Fueled By Ramen/  
[www.fueledbyramen.com](http://www.fueledbyramen.com))

## MIGHTY MOGULS

### "Teenage Party With The Mighty Moguls" CD

Crazed, Japanese good-time garage rock. These folks play with soooo much gusto that it's impossible to not bop along with 'em. Really cool originals and classic cover selections like "Keep A Knockin'" and "Little Latin Lupe Lu". It's probably pretty tough to find a copy, but it's worth searching for. (MC)

(UK.Project Inc./ 5-2-14(@UKP)/  
Daizawa, Setagaya-ku/Tokyo 155-0032/JAPAN)



## MIGHTY MOGULS "Let's Do The Finkin' Dance" 7" EP

More crazy Japanese garage. The title cut is the

lone original, and is also included on their great CD. Of the remaining three tunes, their rockin' version of "I'm A Hog For You" takes the cake. (MC)

(UK.Project Inc./5-2-14(@UKP)/Daizawa,  
Setagaya/Tokyo 155-1132/JAPAN)



## MILES APART "Between You And The Driving Rain" CD EP

I dunno if Italians do it better, but these pasta-heads have put together an excellent version of the melodic/emo SoCal sound. If I hadn't read the sleeve, I would've sworn that this was GAMEFACE at their finest. (RK)

([www.greenrecords.net/tma](http://www.greenrecords.net/tma))



## MILLENCOLIN "The Melancholy Collection" CD

MILLENCOLIN were one of the first Swedish bands to give up on

DISCHARGE and start copying BAD RELIGION instead. They're still doing it rather well. This is a compilation of their early (1994-1995) EPs, B sides, and other "hard to find" stuff. For fans and completists. (RK)

(Epitaph/[www.epitaph.com](http://www.epitaph.com))



## MINOR DISTURBANCE "Don't Tell Me The Truth" CD

Damn, for a minute there I thought I was listening to the ZERO

BOYS "Vicious Circle" LP, because that is what MINOR DISTURBANCE's vocalist sounds exactly like. They even play a good version of "Lights Out" by the ANGRY SAMOANS. This is really cool...and now I know what happened to the ZERO BOYS' singer! (CLL)

(Run & Hide/PO Box  
35094/Philadelphia, PA 19128)

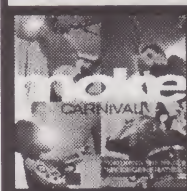
## MIRRORS

### "Hands In My Pockets" CD

Another great example of Cleveland's deep punk roots. The MIRRORS were hot shits in 1973,

playing their VELVETS-inspired proto-punk alongside great bands like the ELECTRIC EELS and ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS. This disc collects their highly collectable 1977 single and a whole slew of unreleased material. If you can find one of these, do not pass it up. (MC)

(Overground/PO Box  
1NW/Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE99 1NW/ENGLAND)



## MOKE "Carnival" CD

Fuck, this is pretty bad. Totally limp radio rock from England. If you read *Hit List*, you won't

like this. End of story. (MC)  
(Ultimatum/  
[www.ultimatummusic.com](http://www.ultimatummusic.com))

## MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

### "Once Upon A Time In America" CD

Intense hardcore along the same lines as Holland's B.G.K. This release from M.C. is much better than their previous recordings, and features fast, pissed-off songs about hatred, beer, and crappy indie rock music. All in all, you get six songs of punk-as-fuck fury. (CLL)

(MolotovCocktail.8m.com /  
[molotovcocktailnyc@yahoo.com](mailto:molotovcocktailnyc@yahoo.com))



## MOMENT "Songs For The Self-Destructive" CD

Half the problem with these emo bands is that they have to put 57

different riffs in each song. So just when you're getting into a groove with a particular tune, it changes entirely. This CD has incredibly beautiful packaging. The music is a hodge-podge of in-vogue emo styles and stylings, all performed impeccably and leaving me entirely cold. Where's HOT WATER MUSIC



when you need em!? (RK)  
(moment32@hotmail.com)

#### **MONKEYWRENCH**

##### **"And One Really Nervous Guy" LP**

When you hear the intro on the record, the title will make sense. This is a live document of the MONKEYWRENCH opening up for PEARL JAM at Wembley. The audience sounds huge, and the recording suffers from a somewhat odd mix, but if you turn it up loud it sounds better. I think this is a band-sanctioned release, despite being made to look like a bootleg. (AW)  
(Trademark of Quality/no address)

#### **MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD**

##### **"NOTHING IN VAIN" CD**

Wow! From the ashes of INDECISION rises M.P.B. How to describe this? It's 6

in the morning and some work crew is jackhammering the sidewalk outside your window. Devastating hardcore. Un-fucking-forgiving. (STM)  
(Trustkill/www.trustkill.com)

#### **MOTT THE HOOPLE**

##### **"The Wild Side of Live" CD**

A cool live recording of MOTT captured at the Fillmore West on two dates in 1970. A good sound, an energetic performance, and the part where IAN HUNTER berates the audience – probably a bunch of hippies – for not dancing and not knowing "good rock'n'roll" is priceless! (AW)  
(Hi-Watt/no address)

#### **MOURNINGSIDE**

##### **"... From Two Graves Back!" CD**

Yet another ripping, fast-paced hardcore band from Boston,

playing a crucial breed of fierce hardcore. Most of the songs deal with death and a graveyard theme. The music and vocals are superior, and it's all pumped out on a killer D.I.Y. record label. (CLL)  
(Rodent Popsicle/PO Box 1143/Allston, MA 02134)



#### **M-16**

##### **"Canciones Escritas..." CD**

These songs are all in Spanish and I only know how to cuss in Spanish, so I have no idea what these guys are talking about. Punchy heaviness peppered with fast parts. Groove heavy with gruff vocals. (STM)  
(Motherwest/www.motherwest.com)

#### **MI6**

##### **"Lunchbox" CD**

Pleasant punk/pop. Most of it is of the more relaxed variety. If you can rock out to BLINK-182 or NOFX at 33rpm instead of 45rpm, you'll undoubtedly groove on this. The usual smooth songs about girls, lesbians, and those of female persuasion. (RK)  
(Kung Fu/www.kunfurecords.com)

#### **MUSCLE CAR**

##### **"SANDRA SULLY" CD EP**

By-the-book punk'n'roll from Australia that's very much like ZEKE and NASHVILLE PUSSY. Contains four originals and a cover of POISON's "Talk Dirty To Me". I know Jeff Bale will be thrilled, but that cover doesn't do a thing for me. (MC)  
(Muscle Car/PO Box 18/Modbury North/S.A. 5092/AUSTRALIA)

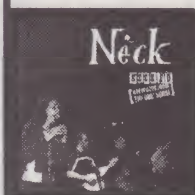
#### **NADS**

##### **"Saigon Hooker" 7" EP**

Gearhead sure went crazy, since

## **REVIEWS**

this is their third great single this issue! The NADS check in with three killer tunes, sounding like a "more punk, less rawk" version of the GAZA STRIPPERS. Fuzzy, maxed-out guitars and hooks to spare. Great sleeve art too! (MC)  
(Gearhead/www.gearheadmagazine.com)



#### **NECK**

##### **"Necked-A Few Odds From The Old Sods" CD**

Oh God, we sooo wish we were the POGUES! We'd even settle for FLOGGING MOLLY! Oi! Very Irish, and actually well done if you're into it! Authentic, even, with banjos and flutes! (LD)  
(www.neck-neck.freeseve.co.uk)



#### **NEGATIVES**

##### **"Wanna See What You Got" 7" EP**

A great fucking record. Thrashed-out garage punk with a BLACK FLAG meets ADOLESCENTS sound. I wanna see what else this band has got. (JC)  
(Hostage/PO Box 7736/Huntington Beach, CA 92615)

#### **NERVES**

##### **"World of Gold" CD**

The NERVES are a rock band with Goth tendencies. Imagine NICK CAVE plus the ROLLING STONES, and the results are interesting. Slow, driving beats, stoned-out lyrics, and kind of a Kurt Veil feel. These guys have some deep dark secrets to share with you. (LD)  
(Thrill Jockey/PO Box 08038/Chicago, IL 60608)



# SHITLIST

## NERVES

### "25th Anniversary" 10" EP

FINALLY! The NERVES' 1976 EP, one of the greatest power pop releases of all time, now given the fab reissue treatment. You get all four original tunes (including the great "Hanging On The Telephone"), two unreleased bonus cuts, and a repro tour poster. Penniman has made me one happy guy. Find at all costs! (MC)

(Penniman/PO Box 32142/08080 Barcelona/SPAIN)

## NEW END ORIGINAL

### "Thriller" CD

Every band of reasonably competent musicians have it in them to write one great tune. The first track on this debut offering from this new emo supergroup (TEXAS IS THE REASON, FAR, CHAMBERLIN) is that song – a brilliant uplifting slice of dual guitar power pop. The rest of the disc is lamentably weak twaddle. A truly great first track, though. (RK)

(Jade Tree/www.jadetree.com)

## NEW JACOBIN CLUB

### s/t CD

Spooky instrumentals and even spookier lyrics like "Satan gave you daddy's gun." Perfect for your next masquerade ball or MISFITS party. 'Nuff said. (LD)

(Manticore Music/PO Box 7266/Saskatoon S7K 4R4/CANADA)

## NEWTOWN NEUROTICS

### "Punk Collection" CD

The NEWTOWN NEUROTICS were a lefty British punk band with poppy and some reggaefied tendencies that managed to churn out lots of great tunes, most of which are collected here thanks to Captain Oi. If you only remember

"Hypocrite" and "Kick Out the Tories", you'll be pleasantly surprised to hear the rest of their material, including low key anthems like "When the Oil Runs Out", "Mindless Violence", and "My Death". Whenever I hear these particular chestnuts, I can't help but be reminded of how lame the current punk and rock scenes generally are. (JB)

(Captain Oi/www.captainoi.com)

## THE NIFTERS



## NIFTERS

### "Riding Shotgun" CD

This Swedish band shares the same love for loud guitars and ultra-fast punk that many of their

countrymen do, but they're a more melodic version of your average speedy punk'n'roll band, which was a welcome change. It's on Scooch Pooch, so you pretty much know what to expect. (MC)

(Scooch Pooch/5850 W. 3rd Street, Suite 204/Los Angeles, CA 90036)

## NOAH BLAKE

### "The Denim" CD EP

First of all, this release is cool because the case is made out of old Levis. The tracks are sweet pop songs with a rock rhythm section à la WEEZER. A good debut, and to top it off these boys are cute! Ladies and Gentleman, take notice. (LD)

(Buckleback/PMB 123/6745 S. Washington Avenue/Whittier, CA 90601)

## NO-COUNTS

### "Gotta Go" 45

Mushroom-haired sixties geeks take note, as the three songs on this here EP are all about girls with hearts of stone and sound exactly as if they were lifted straight offa your "Pebbles" comps and "Nuggets" box sets. Add a drummer who looks like he's about in fourth grade, and it spells fun.

(TS)

(Fast Lane/Box 76/57722 Hultsfred/SWEDEN)

## NOISE GOD

### s/t CD

NOISE GOD are an all-female fast and rough-sounding band from San Diego. They sound similar to the LUÑACHICKS, or perhaps a more hardcore version of L7. Some of their songs are sung in Spanish, but for the most part they're in English, even though it's hard to understand the lyrics either way. (CLL)

(Noise God/PO Box 291/National City, CA 91951)



## NO REDEEMING SOCIAL VALUE

### "40 Oz. Of Hardcore" CD

N.R.S.V are brutal beat down N.Y.H.C group which has a

lot of fast songs with that mixture of metalcore and singalong choruses you can pile onto. This is not straight edge, just pure "new 64" Old-E malt liquor hardcore with a "22 oz. of pain" in-your-face YO! (CLL)

(Triple Crown/331 West 57th Street, PMB 473/New York, NY 10019)

## NOSTROPHILIA



## NOSTRILS

### "Nostrophilia" CDR

This was recorded way back in 1981, and although it's obvious it doesn't hurt the feel of the

record. This Canadian band has some great originals that sound a little like the DESCENDENTS, but way drunk; they do lots of covers too, e.g., by the CLASH, the SAINTS, and the SUBHUMANS. It may be your grandfather's punk band (kidding), but it's heartfelt and will remind you of the good ole days. (LD)

(Black Rose Digital/608 Sherburn



Street/Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G  
2K9/CANADA)

#### THE NUMBERS

# 2

#### NUMBERS

##### "Downtown Girls"

7" EP

A really strong 7". Classic SoCal sounding punk that only suffers from

the (at times) goofy back-up vocals. Other than that, this is a totally recommendable little record. (JC)  
(Hostage/PO Box 7736/Huntington Beach, CA 92615)

#### OLSEN TERROR

##### "Rhetoric Of Empire" CDR

I presume that the lyrics for these tunes are printed for a reason. Reading along, I still can't make out many of the vomited rantings of these Kansas upstarts. The music is tight though, so if you like the new screamo hardcore, you might like this. (LD)  
(PO Box 85/Lawrence, KS 66044)

#### o MELHOR DA

##### "Sanity Assassins" CD

An odd Brazilian release for this American band, and I'm not sure why Rotten Records America didn't also put this out. Not all that interesting, just basic punk rock in an ANGRY SAMOANS/VANDALS vein. Not nearly as good as either of those bands in their prime, though. (JC)  
(Rotten/www.rottenrecords.com.br)

#### ONE LAST THING/CROSSTIDE split CD

Another stellar Rise release from these two up and coming Oregon bands. Dare I use the "e" word? They play passionate post-hardcore music in the vein of TEXAS IS THE REASON and ELLIOTT. If you're into heavy, melodic guitars and great songwriting, check this CD out.

(Rise/PO Box 135 Roseburg,/ OR  
97470))

#### ONWARD TO MAYHEM

s/t LP

This is a killer breed of hardcore punk from Minneapolis with socially aware lyrics about the police system and country we live in, although there are also a lot of songs about beer. O.T.M have a strong anarcho presence which will "assemble to riot and take back the streets" with their huge Mohawks and spiked-up hair! (CLL)  
(Charged/PO Box 157/High Bridge, NJ 08829)

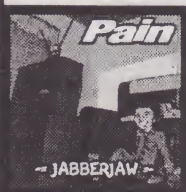


#### OPERATION

##### MAKEOUT

##### "(first base)" CD EP

OPERATION MAKEOUT play a cool brand of pop-punk/indie rock. The tunes are all fairly decent and the vocals reminded me a lot of SLEATER-KINNEY. Strangely though, the cover art, featuring two horny tongues goin' at it, is what makes this release great for me. It's the most disgusting, hilarious cool thing I've seen in a while. (MC)  
(Mint/PO Box 3613/Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y6/CANADA)



#### PAIN

##### "Jabberjaw" CD

Fresh, youthful-sounding cartoony pop/punk with a brisk horn section. Upbeat and great fun, I'm sure. Similar in vein to the HIPPOS, before the latter descended into major label hell. Six tracks, and I for one could use more. (RK)  
(Springman/www.springmanrecord s.com)

## REVIEWS



#### PARK

##### "No Signal" CD

A real powerhouse production drives this otherwise average sounding mid-paced college rock/indie pop effort. It is impressive how a great, full, crisp sound can make the ordinary sound decidedly above average. (RK)  
(Lobster/PO box 1473/Santa Barbara, CA 93102)



#### THE PATTERN

##### "Immediately" CD

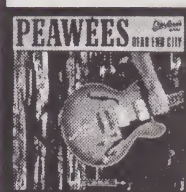
EP

These guys definitely get my vote for best new band of 2001. The PATTERN play fantastic riffy punk inspired by the groove of the STOOGES and the CREATION. This CD collects two previously released 7"s and two exclusive tunes. As great as it is, I've got a hunch that the real goods will be delivered on their album, which I am eagerly anticipating. (MC)  
(Lookout/3264 Adeline Street/Berkeley, CA 94712)

#### PCP ROADBLOCK

s/t CD

Not only are these people complete assholes, they are the worst band I've ever seen. Trust me on this. But since I'm supposed to give this a fair review, I'll add that I did listen to it and it made my spine crawl. (LD)  
(PO Box 4916/Richmond, VA 23220)



#### PEAWEEES

##### "Dead End City" CD

It looks like the influence of SOCIAL DISTORTION travels far. Italy's



# SHITLIST

**PEAWEES** are certainly influenced by Ness and company, with the token gruff vocals and occasional guitar twang. The tunes are decent and the production top notch, but overall it's not very memorable. (MC)  
(Stardumb/PO Box 21145/3001 AC Rotterdam/HOLLAND)

## PENETRATION

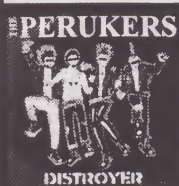
### "Coming Up For Air" CD

A reissue of the second PENETRATION LP, plus bonus tracks. This '77-era female-fronted punkish group had a more conventional rock sound than most of their überpunk peers. Although the band's studio releases never quite managed to capture the excitement of their live gigs and they never again matched the brilliance of "Don't Dictate" or "Firing Squad", this release nevertheless contains some fine songs (such as "Shout Above the Noise", "On Reflection", and the single "Danger Signs"). (JB)  
(Captain Oi/www.captainoi.com)

## PENETRATORS

### "Live At Kenny's 1980" LP

The PENETRATORS perfectly execute D.I.Y garage rock: real punk without all the over-the-top posing. Aside from the live set, there are two decent studio outtakes, "Rock'N'Roll Face" and "Life Stinks", which were my favorite cuts. The kings of basement rock! (MC)  
(Rave Up/Via Montecuccli 13/00176 Rome/ITALY)



## PERUKERS

### "Destroyer" 7"

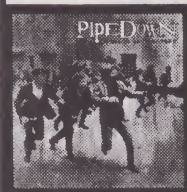
The PERUKERS are a Swedish "DIS"-type band, doing mostly covers by bands like G.B.H.

("Race Against Time"), DOOM ("Police Bastard"), the EXPLOITED ("Alternative"), and two of their own. All the songs are done with a total DISCHARGE vocal style. Oh yeah, we can't forget about the NIRVANA cover that appeared as an extra unlisted track. I'm sure all you crusty punkers will love that. (CLL)  
(Distortion/Box 6294 SE/40060 Gothenburg/SWEDEN)

## THE PINKZ

### "Something About You/Be Mine" 7"

GODDAMN, this is great! The PINKZ take things up a notch on this, their second 7". Female-fronted power pop/punk with some SERIOUSLY great guitar punch. I'm counting the minutes until their album is released. (MC)  
(Gearhead/PO Box 421219/San Francisco. CA 94142)



## PIPEDOWN

### "Enemies Of Progress" CD

Pissed (lefty) political punk. When they slow down a bit, and the singer

actually sings, they're not too dissimilar to ANTI-FLAG. Most of it is heavier, crunchier, and a little more lacking in the catchy tunes dept. Their next record is either going to be truly inspired or embarrassingly awful. (RK)  
(A-F/www.a-frecords.com)

## PITCH BLACK

### "Half Empty" 7"

Three more raging, straightforward blasts from this high-octane yet gloomy punk band. The guitars and vocals really stand out. I would say that this release, much like this band's future, looks great. (BAM)  
(Cheetah's/cheetahsrecords.com)

## PIRX THE PILOT

### s/t CD

I've been hearing about this band and was anxious to find out what they're all about. On this, their first EP, P.T.P. give us a love offering of post-punk politically-minded tunes about the American un-family and a future with little hope. Their sound is intriguing, and the lyrics make you think. Very cool. (LD)  
(New Disorder/115 Bartlett Street/San Francisco, CA 94110)

## PLUGZ

### "Move" 7"

A re-release/bootleg of the original 1978 Slash Records 7", featuring Exene from X on backing vocals. Imagine an East LA version of ADICTS meeting REVILLIOS. (BAM)  
(no address)

## POPPYCOCKS

### s/t CD

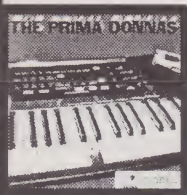
From the crayon-colored penis cover drawing to the silly band photo and no info, this is true D.I.Y. Hey wait, these are RAMONES songs, and this is almost entirely a RAMONES cover album! Lame! And they're not even good, cuz half of the tracks are live and the sound sucks. (LD)  
(Mugshot66@yahoo.com)

## PRE-TEENS

### Mess/New And Old 7"

Two songs that SLEATER KINNEY only wish they could have written. A well-orchestrated mid-tempo indie rocker graces the first side, and there's a great power rocker from the garage on the other. Girls on axes, boy on skins. Great! (BAM)  
(Cheetah's/cheetahsrecords.com)





**PRIMA DONNAS**  
*"Drugs, Sex, Discotheques" CD*

One of my favorites among the current crop of New Wave revivalists. They

have a sound that could have easily been found them on Mute records alongside the NORMAL and early DEPECHE MODE. A perfect example of a band that can show its influences and still be fresh and original. Best line of the year so far: "I jacked off in your diary/please don't tell Tchaikovsky the news". (JC)  
 (Peek-A-Boo Industries/PO Box 49542/Austin, TX 78765)



**THE PROFITS**  
*"Dying For Dollars" 7"*

The PROFITS are straight-up old school anarchist political punk. There

are six songs on this seven inch, all of which are fast and angry, but they mix it up by sharing vocal duties between a pissed-off female vocalist and a strong male vocalist. That makes for a killer combination. (CLL)  
 (Rodent Popsicle/PO Box 1143/Allston, MA 02134)



**PUFFBALL**  
*"The Super Commando" CD*

Super-fast punk from Sweden. PUFFBALL play with enough speed and

power to keep pace with ZEKE, who they're clearly in the same league with. Truth be told, I enjoyed this record much more than the new ZEKE album, so maybe the torch has passed. (MC)  
 (Gearhead/PO Box 421219/San Francisco, CA 94142)

**PUNISHMENT**

*"Where Love is Dead" CD*

Killadelphian hardcore at its finest. Broken jaw brutality backed by undeniable musical proficiency. This puts the hard in hardcore, son. Don't sleep on the 'MENT. This album rules. (STM)  
 (Chord/www.chordrecordings.com)



**QUEERS**  
*"Live In West Hollywood" CD*

A fast and furious rendition of 31 vintage tracks from the finest purveyors

of dumb sub-par RAMONES tunes and sensibility. Fans'll love this, I'm sure. If you've never heard 'em, and dig the RAMONES, ANGRY SAMOANS, PARASITES, and (early) MR T EXPERIENCE – all of whom they cover in this set – you might love 'em too. I like all the aforementioned, but I don't dig em. But maybe I'm just funny that way. (RK)  
 (Hopeless/www.hopelessrecords.com)



**RANDY**  
*"You Can't Keep A Good Band Down" CD*

This is a fucking brilliant collection. In the same way that

PROPAGANDHI mix hardcore left politics with catchy tunes and kick-ass melodies, RANDY pour on both the politics and the rock in an intoxicating mix. Throw in PROPAGANDHI with QUEEN, and lash them down with good ol' rock'n'roll, and you'll discover RANDY'S finest moment, and a truly epic record. (RK)  
 (G-7 Welcoming Committee, distributed via Hopeless)

**RAZZELS**  
*"...Throttle" CD*

Decent pop-punk that flirts with

# REVIEWS



power pop (no, they ain't the same thing). A lot of the faster, melodic moments remind me of ALL. It's a little too generic at

times, but these folks can write a decent pop-punk tune. (MC)  
 (Get Hip/PO Box 666/Canonsburg, PA 15317)

**REDS**  
*"No Style" LP/CD*

This is a real steamcooker of a record. Quality punk rock all the way through. Some of the best tracks on the record are the powerful, chanty "Ready Steady Reds", the RAMONES-y (via the HANSON BROTHERS) "Don't Wake Me Up", a shredding rendition of the URINALS "Ack, Ack, Ack" and what is probably the catchiest song on the disc, "What You Got". Highly recommended. (JC)  
 (Rip Off/581 Maple Avenue/San Bruno, CA 94066)

**REDS**  
*"It's About Time" LP/CD*

The late, great REDS' final full-length slab. It's really too bad that they couldn't stay put, because this is definitely their best release. Fuck...one listen to "I Hate Rules" had me soooooo pissed that this band was no more. Brilliant, herky-jerky '77 punk that blends the raw sounds of Japanese punk and Texas drunken rock. Without question, one of the year's best albums. (MC)  
 (Rip Off/581 Maple Avenue/San Bruno, CA 94066)

**REAGAN NATIONAL CRASH DIET**  
*"Administration" CD EP*

Pretty boring bar-rock/metal from Chicago. Of the eight songs on this CD, the punk-inspired "DNA" was



# SHITLIST

the only one to get my attention. It has good, stupid-punk lyrics and an easy RAMONES-inspired riff. I wish there was more of that here though, cuz the rest ain't so hot. (MC)  
(RNCD/PO Box 578174/Chicago, IL 60657)

## REGISTRATORS "Singles" LP

A must for any punk rock fan. A great collection of rare and hard-to-find (and some not-so-hard-to-find) singles. Japanese garage punk at it's finest, and easily as good or better than bigger bands like TEENGENERATE and GUITAR WOLF. (JC)  
(Rip Off/581 Maple Avenue/San Bruno, CA 94066)



## RIFF RANDELLS "How 'Bout Romance?" 7" EP

Another fine, punky girl-group on Lipstick. What else is new? The RIFF RANDALLS play a pretty straight brand of poppy punk/garage, but that doesn't mean it ain't good. The songs are incredibly catchy and stack up well against bands like the PEEPS and CANDYGIRL. (MC)  
(Lipstick/1154 Powell Street/Oakland, CA 94608)



## RIFFS "A Million Scars" 7" EP

A Hit List correction. The RIFFS are not young and trying to glamorize smack. They have been around the block a few times and they are singing about various hard times experienced and not enjoyed. (Thanks for the letter,

Tony.) Good street punk that's definitely worth checking out. (JC)  
(Vendetta/1951 W. Burnside, Box 1951/Portland, OR 97209)



## RINGWORM "Birth is Pain" CD

Pure glorious hardcore. This album may be TOO good. Never too heavy. Never too fast. Everything is impeccable. This album lays everything in its path to waste like a shooting spree on a crowded street. Glory. (STM)  
(Victory/www.victoryrecords.com)

## RIP OFFS "Got A Record" CD

The Rip Offs were drop-dead amazing, and now their only album is available on CD. I'm kinda sad to see its "vinyl-only" status go away, but whatever, a record this fantastic needs to be heard by as many people as possible. If you like punk rock, you need this album. That's all there is to it. (MC)  
(Rip Off/581 Maple Avenue/San Bruno, CA 94066)

## RUNNING LIKE THIEVES "Same Time Next Year" Advance CD

Another "ex-members of..." band. This time we've got guys from BOLD, CRIPPLED YOUTH, and SUPERTOUCHE. Middle of the road hardcore that leans towards the melodic. Nothing new, for sure, but decently done. Think PENNYWISE. (STM)  
(Livewire/PO Box 239/Seal Beach, CA 90740)



## RUNNIN' RIOT "Monk's Not Dead" CD

These Belfast boys play some fine gruff-sounding Oi music,

even ripping up G.G. ALLIN's "Kill The Police" and TWISTED SISTER's "We're Not Gonna Take It" (changed to "Oi, we're not gonna take it"). Their name derives from COCK SPARRER'S classic song. (CLL)  
(Reject/PO Box 6591/Dun Laoghaire Co./Dublin/IRELAND)



## SATELLITERS "Sexplosive!" CD

Great 60's-inspired garage rock played by people who know what they're fuckin' doing. "Sexplosive" is almost flawless: perfect sound, great fuzzy guitars, and the organ really gets you ready for cocktail time. 60's garage on Dionysus, so you know the drill. (MC)  
(Dionysus/PO Box 1975/ Burbank, CA 91507)



## SATURDAY SUPERCAD "Everyone Is A Target" CD

A super smooth collection of incredibly well-played, well-executed melodic/emo songs. Taken in turn, they sound real good. Listened to in sequence, it tends to get a little trying after four or five tracks. I'm sure the kids love 'em, though. You will too, if you remember the days when GAMEFACE were a fine band. (RK)  
(Liberation/www.liberationrecords.com)

## SCALLIONS "2001 Summer Sampler" CD

An interesting and fun band. They're kind of on the experimental tip, which is perhaps not surprising given that they were on a RESIDENTS tribute comp). Really strong songwriting and excellent musicianship. (JC)  
(www.thescallions.com)



# REVIEWS

SCISSORFIGHT

## SCISSORFIGHT "Mantrapping For Sport And Profit" CD

The tired current breed of "new" metal, or "pimp rock" as I like to call

it. Totally wanky, heavy for the sake of being heavy, just plain dumb rock. I wish all this crap would just go away. (MC)  
(Tortuga/PO Box 15608/Boston, MA 02215)

## SECRET AFFAIR

### "Behind Closed Doors" CD

On their second album, SECRET AFFAIR sought to escape from the neo-Mod ghetto by producing a far more mature and sophisticated LP comparable to the later JAM releases. Although they certainly succeeded in transcending their previous stylistic boundaries, it's debatable whether this was preferable. Here the sound is much slicker and more commercial à la the BOOMTOWN RATS, though there are a few terrific songs (like "Live For Today" and the quasi-psych "Only Madmen Laugh"). (JB)  
(Captain Oi/www.captainoi.com)

## SECRET AFFAIR

### "Business As Usual" CD

The third and final SECRET AFFAIR album was more stripped-down and rather less ambitious than their second, but I like it a whole lot better. It contained several of their best and snappiest songs (including "Lost in the Night", "Hide and Seek", "Three Wise Monkeys", and "Dancemaster"). Elsewhere the sax and horns are frequently overbearing, and the band rarely cranked up their guitars enough. (JB)  
(Captain Oi/www.captainoi.com)

## THE SECONDS

### "Y" CD

Northwest indie/punk weirdness, heavy on the punk side. You know

the sweater crowd loves a good sock-hop, and this actually is pretty bouncy and fun. They do a whole lot of groovin' for a 3 piece, really full sound here. Not bad at all. (MC)  
(5RC/ PO Box 1190/ Olympia, WA 98507)

## SELLOUTS

### "Songs For A Knife Fight" 10" EP

Excellent '77 punk from Brazil. A great, crunchy sound that could easily fit in with the best Rip Off Records bands. They even manage to make tasteful AND very punk use of keyboards. The early singles by this band impressed me, but I wasn't expecting anything quite this good. (MC)  
(Ken Rock/Fabriksgraten 39B/41251 Gothenburg/SWEDEN)

## 7 ANGELS, 7 PLAGUES

### "Jhazmyne's Lullaby" CD

This band takes the best bits of all metalcore's sinister forms and mashes them together honorably. They skimp on nothing. All the heaviness. All the melody. All the technical ability. All the rage. While this genre is turning into a parody of itself, this band may have a chance of standing out as something special. (STM)  
(Uprising/PO Box 42259/Philadelphia, PA. 19104)

## SEVILLE

### "WAITING IN SEVILLE" CD

How much emo/college rock can a man take!?

Four serious young

chaps, dressed sharply (but casually) in black, with matching belts. Accomplished musicians all. And utterly incapable of producing anything beyond by-the-numbers, nondescript musings. Mercifully, this is a mere six tracks, all going nowhere...slowly. (RK)  
(Fiddler/www.fiddlerempire.com)

## SHATZI

### "The Death of the Alphabet EP" CD

Crisp and sparkling radio rock that falls somewhere between WEEZER and BLINK-182. Almost clever enough to stand apart from the pack, but not quite yet. With good harmonies and talented playing, this band has the potential to write one of those evil pop songs that are a guilty pleasure. (JC)  
(Mammoth/99 Hudson Street/New York, NY 10013)



## THE SHODS

### "Stop Crying" CD

Solid and straightforward rock'n'roll from this Boston band. At times, the remind

me of THE REPLACEMENTS, then they take a 50s approach. Not terribly memorable, but not bad. (MC)

(Acme Records/ PO Box 441/ Dracut, MA 01826)

## SHUT UP DONNY/BURNSIDE

### 7" split EP

1. The cover for this is absolutely hilarious. 2. Both bands play a youthful style of melodic skate punk. 3. Although not a big fan of this style, I can still recommend this because both bands infuse their tunes with energy and creativity. (JC)  
(Let's Go/PO Box 156/Campbell, CA 95009)

## LE SHOK

### "L.A. To N.Y." 6" EP

The recently departed LE SHOK offer up one last No Wave blast. The three tunes here come from two radio sessions in L.A. and N.Y., and capture the fucked-upness and immediacy of the band live. The A-side features a killer SCREAMERS cover, while the flip features two



# SHITLIST

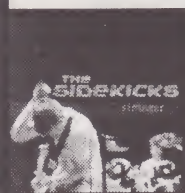
short'n'sharp originals.  
Insanely cool packaging, insanely limited, insane. (MC)  
(Kapow/PO Box 1287/Lake Forest, CA 92609)



**SHOCKWAVE**  
**"Omega Supreme" CD**

Holy shit, this band is awesome. Very PATH OF RESISTANCE. Very

HATEBREED. I can't find anything to criticize here. Even the booklet is hilarious. Buy this CD or suck at life. (STM)  
(Triple Crown/www.triplecrownrecords.com)



**SIDEKICKS**  
**"Stranger" CD**

Ah. the infectious enthusiasm of youth. The SIDEKICKS boot out fourteen pop punk

gems with a verve and dexterity which belies their age. They sing like the kids they are, which only adds to the effect. (RK)  
(Let's Go/www.lets Gorerecords.com)

**SIGHTS**

"Are You Green?" LP  
Super-cool Mod/power pop from another new Detroit band. These guys are way heavier than most Mod influenced groups, and sound like the JAM meeting the MC5. For a trio they also have a really "full" sound, which is captured on tape by Jim Diamond. All the songs are originals, except for a hi-octane cover of the SMALL FACES' "Hey Girl." (AW)  
(Fall Of Rome/www.fallofrome.com)



**SIREN**  
**"The Struggle Goes On" 7"**

Five very in-your-face, fast, pissed-off pro-fem hardcore songs that are

amazingly well-written and have a great production. SIREN are in the vein of GOOD CLEAN FUN, which makes sense since I believe that the bands share a member. Buy this 7" and get your head ripped off by a couple of bad ass chicks! (BAM)

(Reflections/reflectionsrecords.com)

**6-MINUTE HEARTSTOP**  
**s/t CD EP**

This is really original quirky indie rock stuff with some pretty powerful parts. It's very dreamy music that leaves you in a trance, and I haven't heard anything quite like it before. If I had to compare them, I would say newer FUGAZI and KARATE.

(Rise/PO Box 135/Roseburg, OR 97470)

**SONICS**

**"The Savage Young Sonics" CD**

Another year, another Norton SONICS reissue. No complaints from me. This time around, the earliest known recordings of these original punks from 1961 are dug up, dusted off, and given to us. Can't say this is as essential as either of their real albums, but it's cool. For fanatics only. (MC)  
(Norton/Box 646, Cooper Station/New York, NY 10276)

**SOUR JAZZ**

**"Lost For Life" LP/CD**

Mr. Ratboy is back...again. With SOUR JAZZ, he's enlisted the help of some great folks who manage to tap directly into the sound of solo IGGY. Includes a cover of the SAINTS' "Messin' With The Kid", which is an excellent choice that

perfectly illustrates the sound SOUR JAZZ is striving for. Recommended.  
(MC)  
(Ghost Rider/ www.ghost rider-records.com)



**SPITS**  
**"Dropout" CD**

Great '77-style power pop with tons o' tude. A cool record with an old-style and very

garagey sound. Any fan of the BRIEFS, G.G. ALLIN, the ADVERTS, or the type of music that this magazine stands for will really dig this CD. (BAM)  
(Nickelanddimerecords.com)

**SONS OF CYRUS**

**"The Warriors" EP**

From Sweden, a country that seemingly produces more good bands per square mile than you can shake a stick at, come the SONS OF CYRUS. This 4-song effort is reminiscent of Viking Gods the COLUMBIAN NECKTIES or the TURPENTINES, with its high-powered riffs, wah-wah leads way up front in the mix, and a singer who's totally got that dumb foreign person accent. Me like! (TS)  
(Sons Of Cyrus/Erstagatan 21/S-116 36 Stockholm/SWEDEN)

**SONS OF CYRUS**  
**CD EP**

The opening track on this 3-track CD is a melodic yet rocking tune named "Lonely boy". "Fate" reminds me of their townfolk the HELLACOPTERS, riff-wise, but the "Street Fighting Man" cover is a little redundant. OK by me. (TS)  
(Sons Of Cyrus/Erstagatan 21/S-116 36 Stockholm/SWEDEN)

**SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES**  
**"Behind The Music" CD**

Parasol sent me all three of their



# REVIEWS

S.O.O.L. releases, two of which are older releases from '96 and '98. "Behind The Music" is their most recent 2001 offering, and it's a killer. I was a big fan of UNION CARBIDE PRODUCTIONS, a great Swedish band that featured some of the same folks, and this contains a great mix of STOOGES-esque punk, psychedelia, and blues with a loud and full production. (AW)  
(Parasol/www.parasol.com)



## SPITTING TEETH

### "Legacy Of Cruciality" 7"

A title that's worth a thousand words. Thrashy, trashy straight edge

hardcore in the style of the 625 school of music. Crucial as fuck. Fucking GO! (STM)  
(1234GO/716b 47th Avenue NE/Seattle, WA 98105)

## STRAIGHTJACKETS

### "Sing Along With" CD

I like LOS STRAIGHTJACKETS' brand of instrumental rock, but this CD of all vocal stuff really kicks! Each song features a guest singer, some of whom include BIG SANDY, MARK LINDSAY, EXENE CERVENKA, and THE REV. HORTON HEAT. They also do an instro with the TRASHMEN. (AW)  
(Yep Roc/www.redeyeusa.com)



## STRAP-ONZ

### "Can't Hold Back" CD

All right, y'all; this is the STRAP-ONZ from San Antonio, Texas, not Virginia

or New York City! These Texans have an early BAD RELIGION feel to them, but retain a harder melodic streetpunk sound that is totally '80's in terms of style and speed. Yeeee-haw! (CLL)  
(Charged/PO Box 157/High

Brigade, NJ 08829)

## STRIKEOUTS/VAPIDS

### splitted 7"

I've been following the VAPIDS for years now, and they fuckin' rock! They're sort of like a more driving, rock'n'roll-oriented SCREECHING WEASEL. This was my first experience with the STRIKEOUTS, and it turned out that they picked a fitting name. Buy this for the VAPIDS side. (BAM)  
(Drunk Horse/no address)

## Strong Come Ons



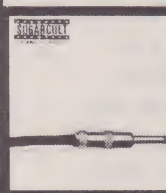
### Trailer Sessions

## STRONG COME ONS

### "Trailer Sessions" 7" EP

These Wisconsin pukers owe a great deal to the OBLIVIANS, as their

name suggests. They pull the sound off well, focusing more on the punk side of things. Really stripped down and actually recorded in a trailer! Hunt this one down. (MC)  
(Pleasure Unit/  
pleasureunitrecords@hotmail.com)



## SUGARCULT

### "Start Static" CD

Well, since this is on a major label, they have the money for "studio magic." Yes, this is slick. And

whatever guts this band may have once had have been produced right out of them. Of course, they'll probably be famous soon. (LD)  
(Ultimatum/8723 W. Washington Blvd./Culver City, CA 90232)

## SUICIDE MACHINES

### "Steal This Record" CD

Another great CD from these Detroit pop-punk-ska-sters. Each release since their inception has found the band expanding its sound and maturing its songwriting, all the while retaining

much of their early punk ska energy. These guys really deserve to be more popular than they are. (AW)

(Hollywood/500 S Buena Vista St./Burbank, CA/91521)



## SUPER-

### CHINCHILLAR-ESUEMISSION s/t CD EP

Does everybody want to sound like LIFETIME and HOT

WATER MUSIC? Whatever, if you enjoy stuff like that, then these guys do it as good as anyone. Then again, they thought it was a good idea to call their band SUPER-CHINCHILLARESUEMISSION, so things are looking grim folks. (MC)  
(Attention Deficit Disorder/PO Box 8240/Tampa, FL 33674)



## SWAMP ASS

### "No Means Go!" CD

Fucking SWAMP ASS. That's almost as good as BATMAN PUKE. Anyway, this is pretty lame hard

rock. They wear nifty costumes and have tunes about dicks, beer, Pissing, and other fantastic subjects. Don't let this happen to you. (MC)

(Reptillian/403

S.Broadway/Baltimore, MD 21231)

## TEARJERKERS

### "Bad Moon Rising" CD

The new band from Jack Oblivian, and it's a doozy! I detect the influence of the STONES' "Exile On Main Street" here, and that's a good thing. Bluesy, dark, messed-up garage rock that bears repeated listenings. (AW)

(Sympathy/www.sympathyrecords.com)



# SHITLIST

**TECH 9**

**TECH 9**  
**"Last Line Of Defence" CD**

Growly tough-guy melodic European 'street' punk. I'm sure these guys dig

RANCID and the early DROPKICK MURPHYS. They even give us a half-decent STIFF LITTLE FINGERS cover. (RK)

(Too Damn Hype/  
[www.chordrecordings.com](http://www.chordrecordings.com))

**TEENGENERATE**

**"Live At Shelter" CD**

Finally, a live document of the greatest Japanese band ever, TEENFUCKINGENERATE. This CD captures an entire live set by these legends, including all your faves and a few never-recorded covers. Great sound too. If you're a fan, you'll wanna hunt this down for sure. (MC)

(Target Earth Records c/o Masao Nakagami/  
[nkgm@odn.ne.jp](mailto:nkgm@odn.ne.jp))



**TEXAS MOTHERFUCKERS**

**"Wreckingball" 7"**

Proof that you can, in fact, judge a band by their name. While they

may not be from Texas, these motherfuckers play that type of boring, rough-vocal punk'n'roll you'd be expecting. Spend your dough on a REDS record instead. (MC)

(Mansfield/2 Avenue Des Freres Lumiere/69008 Lyon/France)



**THERAPY?**

**"Shameless" CD**

I had heard of these guys, but had never heard a record by them. I thought they were

some weird metal/Goth type stuff, but that's not the case here. This is your basic hard rock stuff which is pretty punky at times. Not all that impressive, but I was prepared for the worst. (MC)

(ARK 21/14724 Ventura Blvd.  
 Penthouse Suite/Sherman Oaks,  
 CA 91403)

**THREE SUMMERS GONE**

**"Time Well Spent" CD**

I would want to lump this into the earnest world of indie rock, but it's so much more compelling than that. The musicianship of post-hardcore, the sincerity of emo, and the energy of punk rock. Seek out this album if you are a fan of great rock music. (STM)

(Substandard/[www.substandardrecords.com](http://www.substandardrecords.com))

**THRETNING VERSE**

**"Still Poundin'..." CD**

Even though they spelled "threatening" wrong, perhaps intentionally, THRETNING VERSE play pure East LA hardcore with deep and mean female vocals which sound like those of early SHITLOADS OF FUCK ALL. The recording is a little raw, but the songs reflect real angst and aggression directed against America, religion, and war. But they're also pro-beer, so start "Poundin' the Mickey's." (CLL)  
 (Start A Riot /  
[circlejerk1982@aol.com](mailto:circlejerk1982@aol.com))

**TIGHT BROS FROM WAY BACK WHEN**

**"Lend You A Hand" CD**

When these gnarly-looking guys played in the Netherlands recently, me and the missus were duly impressed by the slash'n'burn dual Gibson assault and the maniacal singer who went buck-wild throughout the entire set, screamed like a perfect cross between Bon Scott and Noddy Holder, and packed a Rob Tyner

'fro to match more facial hair than you're likely to see at the next Harley convention. Tracks like "Might & Maybe" and the MC5-like "Badger" sho' nuff rock the honky tonk outta my goofy ass. (TS)

(Munster/PO Box 18107/28080 Madrid/SPAIN)



**TILT**

**"Been Where? Did What?" CD**

I'd lost touch with TILT over the past few albums, but this collection of demos,

comp tunes, and unreleased material has done a good job of bringing me up to speed. This much-loved East Bay band hasn't missed a beat yet, and their newer recordings sound just as good as the older ones. (MC)

(Fat/PO Box 193690/San Francisco, CA 94119)

**TINA & THE TOTAL BABES**

**"She's So Tuff" LP**

I'm a fan of the BOBBYTEENS, so it's not too surprising that I really enjoy this side project of singer TINA's, which is even more power pop-oriented than her regular band. They even cover "Tell That Girl To Shut Up", a great old HOLLY & THE ITALIANS song. (AW)  
 (Sympathy/[www.sympathyrecords.com](http://www.sympathyrecords.com))

**TOLIET BOYS**

**s/t CD**

Upon first listening to this, the newest CD from these glam-punk-rock boys, I wasn't sure if I dug it as much as their earlier releases. It's definitely cleaner in terms of production, but after a few spins I realized that it was good rock music. Catchy hooks and big choruses propel this along just fine. (AW)

(Masterplan/Hall Of Records/no address listed)





**TOXIC NARCOTIC/A  
GLOBAL THREAT**  
*"The Split 7" 7"*  
TOXIC NARCOTIC  
play two hard-as-  
fuck songs  
("Asshole" and

Shut The Fuck Up"), both of which  
basically speak for themselves and  
are full of hatred against  
people...remember now, "People  
Suck!" A GLOBAL THREAT do two  
chaotic punk songs ("On The  
Clock" and "We're Better Than  
You"), both of which are short,  
fast, and right to the point. (CLL)  
(Rodent Popsicle/PO Box  
1143/Allston, MA 02134)



**TOYS THAT KILL**

*"The Citizen  
Abortion" CD*

A great new punk  
band featuring ex-  
F.Y.P. members. Not  
as snotty as their

old band, but just as catchy and  
maybe a bit more aggressive. One  
of my favorites of this issue. (JC)  
(Recess/PO Box 1666/San Pedro,  
CA 90733)



**TRANSCHAMPS**

*"Double Exposure"  
CD EP*

Indie rock  
superpowers the  
FUCKING CHAMPS  
and TRANS AM pull

a MINUTEFLAG. This is pretty much  
worthless unless you are big fan of  
either band (which I'm not). There  
are a couple of rockers sandwiched  
in between instrumentals. Not  
horrid, but not all that good. (MC)  
(Thrill Jockey/PO Box  
08038/Chicago, IL 60608)

**TRANS MEGETTI**

*"Fading Left To Completely On" CD*

This band's got all the right  
elements: a cool indie name, cute  
design, and slick production. But  
they just don't do anything for me.

I know everything's derivative, but  
this particularly isn't unique  
enough for me. (LD)  
(Gern Blandsten/PO Box 356/River  
Edge, NJ 07661)

**TRICKY WOO**

*s/t 10" EP*

This is the third release I've heard  
by these guys and I'm officially not  
into them. I mean, yeah, they kinda  
rock, but it's all too wanky, jammy,  
and (for lack of a better term)  
stoned, dude. Are they bad? No,  
but it just ain't my thing. (MC)  
(Mag Wheel/PO Box 555, Station  
P/Toronto, Ontario M5S  
2TI/CANADA)

**TROUBLE BOUND GOSPEL**

*"Let's Get Physical!" CD*

Dark and creepy Euro-trash rock  
with fucked-up lyrical content that  
isn't for the squeamish. A little  
jazzy at times, but mostly rock with  
a flavor of JESUS LIZARD or the  
LORD HIGH FIXERS. All of it is sung  
with a heavy Finnish accent. (JC)  
(Sportin' Life/PO Box 507/20101  
Turku/FINLAND)

**20 DOLLAR WHORE**

*"Teenage Fuckin' Boredom" EP*

This is the best thing I've heard  
from Finland in ages! Totally  
fucked-up, scuzzed-out garage  
punk with great hooks! You'll  
definitely get your rock'n'roll fix  
with this. (AW)  
(Big Neck/www.bigneckrecords.com)



**TV KILLERS**

*"Splush You Up" 7"  
EP*

English, very  
English. The girl on  
the cover looks  
bored, not sexy. The

band sound, on the other hand, is  
full of trashy rock'n'roll goodness.  
Also features a bitchin' ANGRY  
SAMOANS cover. (JC)  
(Dead Beat/PO Box 283/Los

# REVIEWS

Angeles, CA 90078)



**ULTRA BAIT**

*"Bitch 4 Hire" CD*

I was afraid to  
listen to this. The  
cover depicts a very  
freaky chic/alien.  
But upon hearing it,

I'm just disappointed. It's a sad  
attempt at an L7 rip off that's just  
not original enough. (LD)  
(Voo Doo/PMB 152/4221-125  
Pleasant Valley Road/Virginia  
Beach, VA 23464)

**UNDISPUTED HEAVYWEIGHT  
CHAMPIONS**

*"Stay Down" CD*

This is the second full-length  
release from the U.H.C., and they  
sure will live up to their name with  
this solid hardcore rocking release.  
Vocalist Jay has a definite  
AGGRESSION feel to his voice, and  
the music is pure, tight, and  
intense. They may be from Seattle,  
but they do not come anywhere  
near that washed-up grunge  
sound. (CLL)  
(Starvation/80724 Willow  
Lane/Indio, CA 92201)



**THE UNIFORM**

*"Black and Vain"  
CD*

I like everything  
I've heard by this  
band. They play  
really cool punk

rock that reminds me of GANG OF  
FOUR and bands of that ilk,  
something that's hard to do well.  
The tunes are tight and to the  
point. (MC)  
(Morphius/PO Box  
13474/Baltimore, MD 21203)



# SHITLIST

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "The Basement Tapes" CD

Unbeknownst to me, Bert Bask took it upon himself to unleash a few previously unreleased mouldy oldies from the SLUGROCK legacy upon the discerning consumer (m)asses by including mastered-from-cassette-outtakes from several of my bands (including the NITWITZ, LOVESLUG, and the HYDROMATICS) on this compilation. Basically an incestuous cross-fertilisation affair, it offers fairly enjoyable but not essential tunes by, dare I say, uh, the aforementioned groups, BIG PAULUS, SGEURVRETTERS, BLACK LABEL, and SPEEDLOOP. The odd band out here is a self-proclaimed "authentic ska and rocksteady" Dutch outfit called RUDE RICH & THE HIGH NOTES, who suck more dick than a busload fulla donkey-bobbing Tijuana hookers. (TS) (Bask/PO BOX 59524/1040 LA Amsterdam/HOLLAND)



## VARIOUS ARTISTS "Bomb Threat" CD

The common denominator of this comp is that all bands are from North and South

Carolina. There are many different styles of punk represented. Not all the bands are worth mentioning, but some of the highlights are PEIDMONT CHARISMA, ALLI WITH AN I, and the NEEDLES. Pick this up if you're looking for the latest and the freshest. (LD) (Suicide Watch/PO Box 959/Charlotte, NC 28299)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "In Defence of Our Future... A Tribute to Discharge" CD

This tribute CD is actually done really well by all Swedish hardcore bands. The UNCURBED start this

off with "A Hell on Earth", and then it's all non-stop DISCHARGE mayhem with bands like ACURSED, TOTALITÄR, AVSKUM, PERUKERS, DISFEAR, DRILLER KILLER, DISKONTO, MEANWHILE, GREED, D.D.A., GENOCIDE SS, DYSFUNCTIONAL, DISFUCKED, and many other growling bands. (CLL) (Distortion/Box 6294 SE/40060 Gothenburg/SWEDEN)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

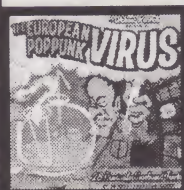
### "Deranged Records Sampler/Promo" CD-R

I grabbed this for review because it has some tunes by DS-13, my current favorite HC band. Since I'm rediscovering this kind of stuff, it was kinda cool to hear some more bands like HAYMAKER, VOORHEES, and OUT COLD. Still, no one can really hang with DS-13 on this comp, in my opinion. Decent stuff. (MC) (Deranged/PO Box 543, Station P/Toronto, Ontario M5S 2TI/CANADA)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Downbeat" CD

One of the finest compilations of rare 60's beat yet, this time (no surprise) from Holland. One listen to the opening jaw-dropping blast, 4PK's "Down and Out", and you'll know that you've stumbled onto a top-notch collection put together by people with impeccable taste. The whole comp, whether showcasing punky beat, heart-rending moody laments, or Merseybeat, has a fetching garage aesthetic, and the bottom line is that it's filled with killer songs. A must. (JB) (no label or address listed)



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "The European Pop Punk Virus" CD

A nice sampler of bands from all over Europe, including

solid tracks by bands I already knew that I dug, like the SONIC DOLLS, TRAVOLTAS and APERS. This comp also turned me on to a few new ones, such as the LULABELLES, FURIES, and BATTLEDYKES. 28 tracks in all, with the hits far outnumbering the misses. (JC) (\$TARDUMB/PO Box 21145/3001 AC Rotterdam/HOLLAND)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Fight The World: A 7 Seconds Tribute CD

Tribute comps are a gamble, but this bastard delivers. Though lacking the raw, spontaneous appeal of the originals, these covers give a whole new perspective on Reno's proudest sons. The standouts include tracks by GOOD CLEAN FUN, H2O, and...ah hell, they're all pretty sweet. (STM) (Reflections/www.reflections.demo.n.nl)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Flying Sidekick: Home Alive Compilation II" CD

A great compilation for an eminently worthy cause. Seventeen outfits provide unreleased tracks to benefit the outreach and women's self-defence classes provided by the fine Home Alive organization. From punk to folk, it's all here. The quality ranges from the exceptional (SONGS FOR EMMA, BLACK HALOES, AMY RAY & THE BUTCHIES and SANFORD ARMS stand out) to the pretty dire, but there's more than enough good shit for everyone. (RK) (Broken/www.brokenrekids.com)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Friday At The Hideout" CD

An excellent compilation of Detroit area garage bands from 1964-1967. This CD showcases some fairly famous rockers "before they were



# REVIEWS

stars". You get (butthead) Bob Seger, (dork) Glenn Frey, and Suzi Quatro. Quatro's PLEASURE SEEKERS turn in the best tune, "What A Way To Die". It's worth it for them alone, but the rest of it ain't so bad either. (MC)  
(Norton/Box 646, Cooper Station/New York, NY 10276)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Give The People What They Want: The Songs of The Kinks" CD

I love the KINKS, so I was kinda weary of seeing a tribute comp, since such things suck nine times out of ten. There is a fair amount of garbage on here, but there are also a few great moments. My favorite would be the BRIEFS doing "Come Dancing", and other cool versions are delivered by the FASTBACKS, MURDER CITY DEVILS, and MAKERS. It's all downhill from there. (MC)  
(Sub Pop/  
[www.subpoprecords.com](http://www.subpoprecords.com))



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Life's a Gas: A Tribute to Joey Ramone" CD

Amp Records, the kings of extremely long punk comps. I appreciate the value for your dollar that they provide, but one or two comps like this when you are trying to blow through a bunch of record reviews can really bog you down. Anyway, Joey Ramone deserves this and 1000 more tributes, and I would like to think that this would have made him proud. Lots of great heartfelt tunes, all in homage to the great one. (JC)  
(Amp/92 Kennilworth Avenue S./Hamilton, Ontario L8K 2S9/CANADA)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Lobster Records: Greetings" CD

A label sampler from the fine folks at Lobster. They have that melodic

SoCal hardcore/modern indie/emo sound pretty much down. Unreleased tracks from STARING BACK, YELLOWCARD, and MOCK ORANGE, plus BUCK WILD, PARK, WHIPPERSNAPPER, and JOYSTICK. (RK)  
(Lobster/[www.lobsterrecords.com](http://www.lobsterrecords.com))



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Lookout! Freakout, Episode 2" CD

The second Lookout!/Panic Button budget sampler compilation. New unreleased music from SQUIRTGUN, AMERICAN STEEL, BLACK CAT MUSIC, YESTERDAY'S KIDS, and the WANNABES, plus recently released cuts from the rest of the stable – ALKALINE TRIO, LILLINGTONS, DONNAS, ANN BERETTA, MR T EXPERIENCE, BRATMOBILE, etc. (RK)  
(Lookout/[www.lookoutrecords.com](http://www.lookoutrecords.com))

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Nederbeat: Beat, Bluf & Branie, '63-'69" 5XCD boxset

The 60's beat vaults keep opening up and spewing forth their treasures. In the wake of the "Nuggets II" boxset, perhaps a 5-CD package of Dutch beat shouldn't come as all that much of a surprise. Alas, those who already own the albums by Q65, the OUTSIDERS, GOLDEN EARRING, the MOTIONS, and the SHOCKING BLUE, not to mention the great "Dutch Beat Explosion" compilation, will already have many of the choicest of these 125 (!) cuts. Even so, and despite the presence of some real klunkers, there are some excellent super-rare tracks herein. (JB)  
(Hunter Music/[hunter@wxs.nl](mailto:hunter@wxs.nl))

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "920 Blues: Wisconsin Rock'n'Roll" LP

When did Wisconsin start shitting out great bands in clumps? Seriously, every tune on this comp rocks; there's not a bad tune in the bunch. You get great bands like SAGGER, the MISTREATERS, TEENAGE REJECTS, and (non-cheeseheads) the REDS. I can't remember the last time I heard an original comp this good. (MC)  
(Trick Knee/PO Box 12714/Green Bay, WI 54307)



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "No Idea 100: Redefining Music" CD

Sixteen No Idea stalwarts - HOT WATER MUSIC, CLAIEMEL, SMALL BROWN BIKE, FAY WRAY, ANTHEM EIGHTY EIGHT et al – torture and maim a series of covers. Many of 'em (save covers of ASSHOLE PARADE, GORILLA BISCUITS, the CLASH, CIRCLE JERKS, and LEMONHEADS) are not punk songs either, which makes a refreshing change. A fine tribute to a glorious label. Lets have 100 more, please. (RK)  
(No Idea/[www.noidearecords.com](http://www.noidearecords.com))

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Punch Drunk III: The TKO Records Compilation" CD

TKO really do have a fine roster these days. The 26 gems featured here include previously unreleased tracks from the BELTONES, FORGOTTEN, THUG MURDER, BODIES, STITCHES, CLASS ASSASSINS, GUITAR GANGSTERS, THOSE UNKNOWN, TERMINUS CITY, BONECRUSHER, RIFFS, AMERICAN PIG, BLOODY MUTANTS, HARDBODY, and ANGELIC UPSTARTS. Pure class. (RK)



# SHITLIST

(TKO/4104 24th Street #103/San Francisco, CA 94114)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Pushing Scandinavian Rock to the Man, volume 2" CD

The Danish Society for the Preservation of Outdated US Slang, Bad Afro Records, done did release anudder platter for all youse cool cats and righteous rag babes out there. Man oh man, there's hijinx a-plenty to be had with the BURNOUTS, the ROCKETS, and the best thing to come outa Denmark since Lego, the COLUMBIAN NECKTIES. Garage stompers the CHRONICS, DIALTONES, MOTHER SUPERIOR, and MAGGOTS also give you that feeling of wholesome goodness that one can only obtain after a gentle douche of vinegar and water. (TS)  
(Bad Afro)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "R.A.F.R. Volume 3" CD

You know the drill with these, which are very much along the lines of the "Fistful Of Rock" compilations. 28 tunes total, featuring some great bands like the BELLRAYS, the STARVATIONS, the SUPERBEES, and the (return of the) HUMBERS. For those who haven't yet OD'd on comps. (MC)  
(R.A.F.R./11054 Ventura Blvd. #205/Studio City, CA 91604)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Redefine The Rockstar, volume 5" CD

I'm guessing this is a "pay to play" compilation. I've never heard of any of the bands (not that that necessarily means much) and it would be stretching the normal applications of the fair use of the English language to call most of 'em punk. That is probably the

fairest thing I can say about this. Most of the bands do have guitars, I suppose. (RK)  
(3:16 Productions/  
www.316productions.com)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Reptilian Records: Sonic Assault, Fall 2001 Sampler" CD

Lotsa rawk. Some decent bands like the DWARVES, EASY ACTION, CHERRY THIRTEEN, and the NITS (whose video appears on this enhanced CD). It's a label sampler, so I'm sure it's cheap or free. (MC)  
(Reptilian/403 S. Broadway/Baltimore, MD 21231)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Rise Records: The 1st 10 Years" CD

A 10-year anniversary release from Oregon's Rise Records which features all the Rise bands, including DIVIT, ONE LAST THING, and WATCH IT BURN. It also contains some other great bands, such as AMERICAN NIGHTMARE, HIMSA, BREATHE IN, TIME SPENT DRIVING, and an unreleased VERBAL ASSAULT recording. 22 songs appear on this very diverse comp that has hardcore, emo, punk, indie and rock. Highly recommended.  
(Rise/PO Box 135/Roseburg, OR 97470)



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Supersonic Sounds from the 'Fuck You' Movement" CD

JERKY BOYS look out, here is a compilation that mixes prank phone calls, sloppy music, and weirdness all on one CD. The prank phone calls are the best part of the CD, which doesn't say much for the bands (if you can really call some of them bands). Regardless, you'll find some decent noise from bands like P.C.P ROADBLOCK, NUMBER ONE

BLOOD, CHARM CITY BUTCHERS, SUPPRESSION, PUS DEL RECTO, and KOJACK; the other artists listed offer weird annoying noise. (CLL)  
(C.N.P./PO Box 14555/Richmond, VA 23221)

## VARUKERS

### "Singles and Rarities" CD

What can I say, but this is another classic re-release of rare and possibly some unreleased VARUKERS material. The cover on my copy was missing, but you get thirteen songs' worth of extreme, uptempo English punk rock. (CLL) (no label or address listed)

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Songs For Cassavetes" DVD and CD Soundtrack

Justin Mitchell's great 16mm documentary on the indie rock boom of the mid-to-late 1990s. The film itself is a fantastic, in-depth look at the subject from a true fan's perspective, with interviews and live footage of the PEECHEES, the HI-FIVES, the MAKE-UP, and many more. The above-mentioned bands are also featured on the companion soundtrack CD, which is decent. Well worth watching. (MC)  
(Better Looking/  
www.betterlookingrecords.com)



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### "Team Mint, volume 2" CD

Overall, I don't like this compilation and don't care for most of the bands. That said, there were a few exceptions. HUEVOS RANCHEROS played an awfully catchy tune with lots of chunky power chords, the CORN SISTERS and NEKO CASE & HER BOYFRIENDS added some trailer park country chic (I especially enjoyed the latter's velvety drawl), and the EVAPORATORS made punk rock proud with a song that could



have easily come out of the DICKS' early repertoire. (JC)  
(Mint/PO Box 3613/Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y6/CANADA)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS

##### *"Viva La Vinyl, volume 4" LP*

The latest in Dead Beat Records' great series of vinyl-only compilations. You're pretty much guaranteed a handful of great tunes on every volume, and my faves this time around were by the DIALTONES, FLASH EXPRESS, and the GERIATRIX. Like the other installments, well worth checking out. (MC)  
(Dead Beat/PO Box 283/Los Angeles, CA 90078)

#### VELVET CRUSH

##### *"A Single Odyssey" CD*

I remember absolutely going nuts over this band's first single, "One Thing To Believe", way back in 1990. Then I sorta lost track of them, and this new CD is an excellent way to get reacquainted. Jangly folk-rock influenced power pop, with influences ranging from the BYRDS to the MODERN LOVERS. (AW)  
(Action Musik/www.parasol.com)



#### VERONICA

##### *"Hope For A Brighter Future" CD*

Why does Christian rock (college rock, in this case) suck so fucking badly? At

least the purveyors of sex, drugs, sin, and fast modes of transport occasionally string together a good ass-kicking tune once in a while. VERONICA do not. (RK)  
(The Militia Group, no address listed)

#### VICTIMS FAMILY

##### *"Apocalicious" CD*

No! Please make it stop! The return of punk rock's most prolifically annoying (or is it annoyingly prolific?) band, with the same shtick of super heavy and dark or spastic gymnastic instrumentation. I liked about half of "Voltage and Violets" fifteen years ago, but that's about it. (JC)  
(Alternative Tentacles/PO Box 419092/San Francisco, CA 94141)

#### VIPERES/HOLY CURSE

##### *"Rock'n'Roll Ain't No Solution" CD*

Les VIPERES from Quebec play enjoyable HEARTBREAKERS-style rockin' punk. Sharing this disc is the last and only rock'n'roll band from Paris, HOLY CURSE, who wear their RADIO BIRDMAN/NEW CHRISTs influences on their sleeves. That's not a bad place to be, so if it's your can o' beans check these guys out. (TS)  
(Shark Attack/B.P.N. 171/75 563 Paris, Cedex 12/France)

#### VIRGIN MEGA WHORE

##### *"The Door Knob Of San Diego" 7" EP*

Totally deranged punk that destroys all notions of sex and rock'n'roll. Sex-crazed damage interspersed between IGGY's "TV Eye" howl and Ian Mackaye's "Don't you fucking get it?" Fans of the LOCUST and LE SHOK should hunt this down. But be warned that you'll probably "never fuck again." (MC)  
(Youth Attack/PO Box 12632/San Diego, CA 92112)

#### THE VIRUS

##### *"Singles and Rarities" CD*

This is a good collection of some kick-ass out of print recordings from this pure streetpunk spikey-haired band out of Philly. There's lots of speed, aggression, and scream-along choruses and back-ups in their songs. I only wish I'd

## REVIEWS

gotten a cover with the CD, but the music speaks for itself and that's all that matters. (CLL)  
(Punkcore/PO Box 916/Middle Island, NY 11953)

#### VICTORY FLAG

##### *"The Soundtrack To Your Miserable Life" CD*

From the ashes of Cleveland's FACE VALUE, you get VICTORY FLAG with a blazing breed of hardcore that is pure, strong, and just downright sick. The FLAG has risen and will soon take over the hardcore community, Cleveland-style. (CLL)  
(Sin Klub Entertainment/PO Box 2507/Toledo, OH 43606)

#### VOLK BROTHERS

##### *"Rock With The Volk Bros." CD*

More cool 60's rock from the Northwest. While the WAILERS and SONICS were playing high school dances and frat parties with their garage rock, the VOLK BROTHERS were whipping many beer-soaked, working class tavern crowds into a frenzy with classic roots rock and countrified R&B. This won't blow your mind, but you can tell that they knew how to rock it. (MC)  
(Dionysus/  
www.dionysusrecords.com)

#### THE VON STEINS

##### *"On Display" CD-R*

By all appearances, this is a demo. However, there's remarkable promise here. Not at all

#### THE VON STEINS ON DISPLAY

what I expected: well-crafted New Wave with synth. They've got the right idea by letting the punk influence seep into things. A hell of a lot more interesting than your average punk'n'roll clone. (MC)  
(1st Born Entertainment, no address listed)



# SHITLIST

## WATCH IT BURN

### "Radio Pollution" CD

I saw these guys a couple of years ago and they blew me away, since the power and energy of their live show is unstoppable. W.I.B.'s newest full-length finally does them justice with a quality recording and more dynamic songs. Fans of H.W.M. and JAWBREAKER will eat this up. (Rise/PO Box 135/Roseburg, OR 97470)



## WHIPS AND FURS

### "So Push the Buttons" 7" EP

A solid, energetic young band that reminds me at times of A.F.I., but

in a positive way. I especially like the kind of off-kilter chorus to "So Push the Buttons". This is a band to check out. (JC)

(Whips and Furs/PO Box 1893/Denton, TX 76202)



## WHITE LIGHTS

### "Another Face" CD

This CD sucks. The band seems to consist of arty farty jackasses who have spent way too

much time alone in their rooms listening to TOM WAITS and MARIANNE FAITHFULL records. Emulation without ingenuity or originality = lame. The singer's over the top, wannabe sultry voice falls a lot closer to that of Elmer Fudd than Marlene Dietrich. (JC) (Worry Bird/PO Box 95485/Atlanta, GA 30347)

## WHITE OCTAVE

### "Menergy" CD

The first thing that comes to mind is that they remind me a lot of AT

THE DRIVE IN. Upon further listening, I find a group that takes risks, knows their instruments, and does a good job of getting you to feel something. If you're a fan of FUGAZI or CURSIVE, you should definitely check this out.

(LD)

(Initial/PO Box 17131/Louisville, KY 40217)

## WHITE STRIPES

### "Hotel Yorba" CD EP

The major label debut release by everyone's favorite (or least favorite) bluesy duo. With the amount of press these folks got last year, it was only a matter of time before the majors went fishing. Love 'em or hate 'em, you can't deny good songwriting, which definitely applies to "Hotel Yorba". Regardless, I hope they go on to conquer the world. (MC) (XL Recordings/ Third Man Records/ [www.xlrecordings.com](http://www.xlrecordings.com))



## WILDBUNCH

### "Danger! High Voltage" 7" EP

The WILDBUNCH characterize their sound as "Disco Metal", but I'm

hearing a hearty mix of BEEFHEART and DEVO, although it is heavy. Whatever the case may be, this is the shit and is one of my favorite EPs this year. Great sound, lotsa rock, and a JACK WHITE cameo. Fire in the disco! (MC) (Flying Bomb/PO Box 971038/Ypsilanti, MI 48197)

## WIPERS

### "Box Set" 3xCD

Now this is cool! A three-CD set of remastered versions of the first three WIPERS LPs, plus a slew of outtakes, all of which show just how ahead of their time and influential the WIPERS were. Great liner notes and a superior sound make this the "box set of the

month" for me. (AW)

(Zeno/P.O. Box 97281/Phoenix, AZ/85060)



## WIMPY DICKS

### "So What!!" CD

If I recall, the WIMPY DICKS have been around since the mid-80's. I thought they were

long gone, but this latest release proves they're still around and ripping it up. They have a grooving skate punk style that is fast and old school-sounding, but also mix in some surf and rock'n'roll touches. (CLL)

(Bopp N' Skin/PO Box 14016/San Luis Obispo, CA 93406)

## WITCHES

### "Universal Mall" LP

I'd never heard this Detroit combo before, but now I'm glad I have. They play a great mixture of punk, psych, and blues, and the record was recorded by now legendary engineer Jim Diamond, who's responsible for so much cool Detroit garage rock. This is bound to appeal to fans (like myself) of said "Detroit Sound." (AW) (Fall Of Rome/[www.fallofrome.com](http://www.fallofrome.com))



## WONTONS

### "Hex Appeal" CD

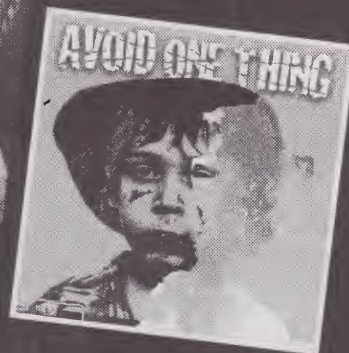
I picked up a great single by these folks a while back, but this CD blows it out of the water. The

WONTONS play garage punk that covers both the raw and pop ends of the spectrum, and are equally effective at doing both. A cool new band to check out. (MC) (Bloody Banner/PO Box 49472/Austin, TX 78765)



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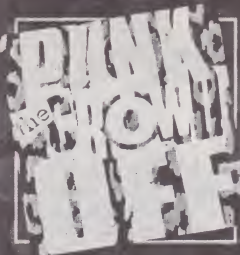
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## THE SLASH CITY DAGGERS "Backstabber Blues" CD

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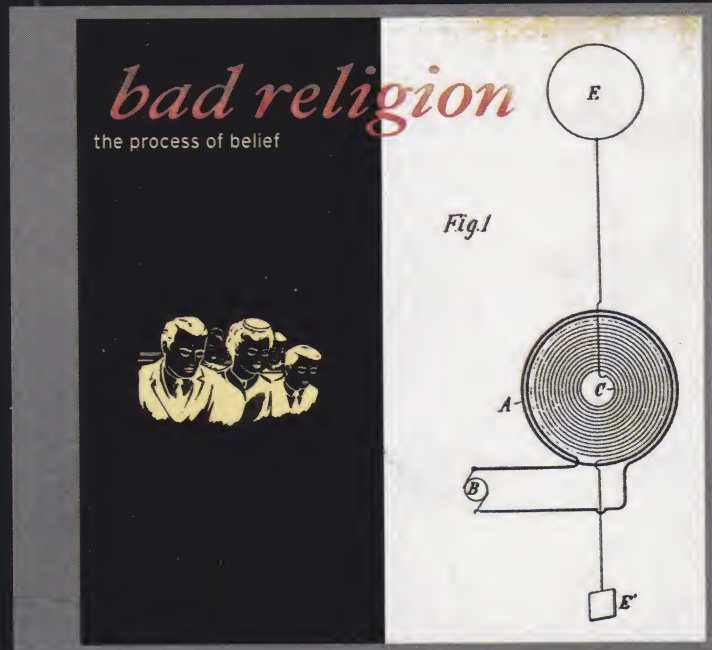
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